A NEWSFIELD PUBLICATION
No.28 MAY 1986
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CRASH

ZX SPECTRUM

STARSTRUCK & STRIPPED

STARSTRIKE II
SAMANTHA FOX POKER



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MONTHLY SPECTRUM SOFTWARE REVIEW

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OLIVER FREY



CRASH

ZX SPECTRUM

ISSUE No. 28 May 1986

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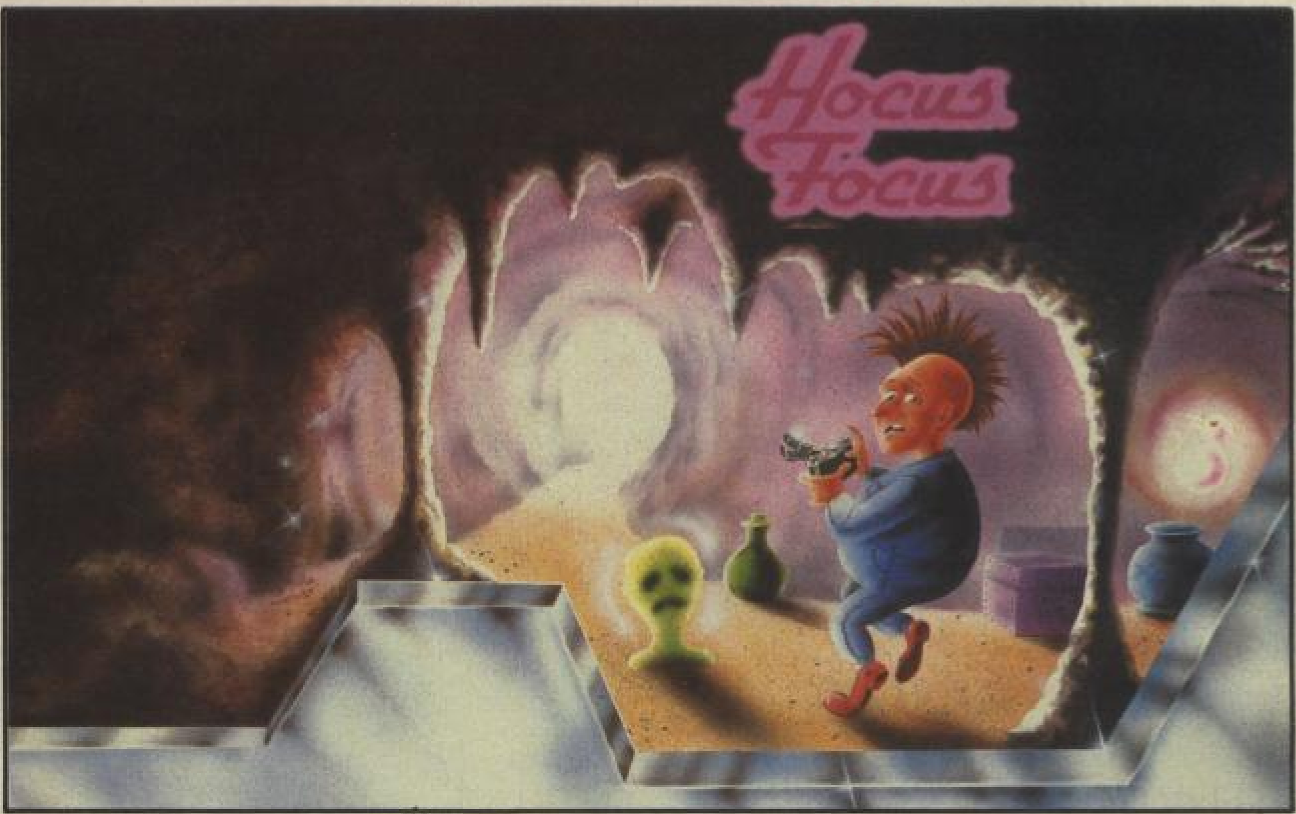
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Inside Your Daily Shocker Today

ON PAGE 3 MAX HEAD-ROOM as you've never seen him before. The Shattering Truth about GLASS on the Amstrad. Famous Golfer Defects From Commodore and Spectrum.

EXCLUSIVE

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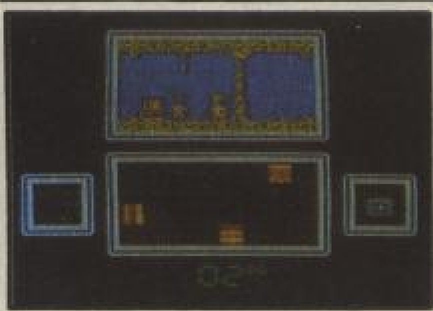


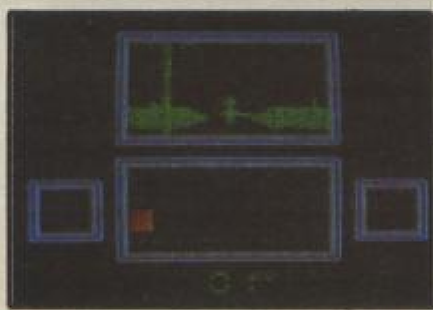
YTS BOY THWARTS POTTY PROFESSOR

by Scoops McBoozer

The existence of a secret lab under Kew Gardens was discovered yesterday by Youth Trainee, Jeremy Windburn (17).

When congratulated on his coup he replied, "Oh Gosh! It was nothing." Windburn (16) is employed by the Shocker as a trainee photographer and this was his first assign ment. Breaching the security system he managed to capture photographs of the latest inventions from the manic mind of the jailed Professor Pillock. On his return Windburn (47) was rushed to hospital to be detoxified after braving the terrors of the radioactive underground lab. His girlfriend pouting blonde Amanda (19) said "What a hero."





QS SPILL THE BEANS

A spokesperson from Quick-silva today comfirmed rumours that they are about to release a game based on the exploits of the famous Jeremy Windburn. To be titled HOCUS FOCUS, this follows the exciting media coverage of his daring raid on the secret underground H.Q. of the notorious Potty Professor Pillock.

Selling at £8.95 this program will be available for the Commodore 64 and Spectrum. A source close to Windburn, rumoured to be Amanda (90) said "I'll have four of each".

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CRASH

ZX SPECTRUM

The announcement that Amstrad has bought Sinclair Research, made a few hours before this issue of CRASH went to press, is the most significant development in the UK home computer market since the launch of the ZX80.

Clive Sinclair had little option but to accept Alan Sugar's offer of £5million for the worldwide rights to sell and manufacture all existing and future Sinclair computer products. It was a case of take Amstrad's money or go into receivership, by all accounts except Sir Clive's. After six years, Clive Sinclair has left the home computer market.

The QL is effectively dead — it's unlikely to resurface unless Amstrad sells the machine to a third party. The Microdrive, seen as a personal pet project of Sir Clive, is also likely to die — Amstrad have no time for erratic floppy tape drives, preferring the straightforward, non-innovative but reliable three inch disc system as installed on their present range of computers.

Buying out the opposition is a bit of a policy departure for Amstrad — in the past the company has avoided takeover bids. Now, for a bargain basement price, Amstrad have been able to consolidate their position in the home computer market. Providing the Office of Fair Trading doesn't object to the deal, Amstrad now has sixty percent of the UK home computer market by volume.

The acquisition of Sinclair's computers will allow Amstrad to dominate the entertainment side of home computing — and it is the Spectrum that will lead the new push. This is good news.

At the press conference held to announce the deal, Amstrad's boss, Alan Sugar, dropped hints about £139 price entry points, integral cassette players, an organised software market with Amstrad giving 'approval' to products and disc drives for the Spectrum. He said nothing about cheap entertainment consoles based on the Spectrum — £139 for a 128K Spectrum with integral tape drive and joystick port would be a good deal — but don't be surprised if a 48K Spectrum games machine appears in the shops before this Christmas. Selling for around thirty pounds.

But is Commodore on Alan Sugar's shopping list, too?



Graeme Kidd

OLIVER FREY

THANKS A MILLION!

(Well thanks, a 89,441 in the UK, anyway)

Well! Thank you. We've just received the figures from the Audit Bureau of Circulations (the people who keep an eye on magazine sales and come up with definitive circulation figures), and they reveal that CRASH is the biggest selling computer magazine in the UK and Eire. Gosh!

And it's all down to you, dear readers, the nice people who scamper out every month and purchase a copy of CRASH thus paying our wages, keeping the team in Old Flatulence Bitter and cheese and onion sarnies and allowing us to sit here in Ludlow playing computer games and writing the magazine. It'll take a bit of doing, getting to the million — but who knows, eh?

Shifting gear slightly, we've been able to conduct a bit of a straw poll on the CRASHTIONNAIRE forms with the aid of our very own Database Minion, Gaz. He's stopped up nights, worn his contact lenses to a frazzle by staring at a computer screen and input the data from 500 of your forms so far. The preliminary findings are interesting, to say the least, so here's a bijou rounupette of the results so far. Fuller details will be made available in a later issue, after a lot more time at the keyboard.

Taking things in order, it seems that most of you have been reading CRASH for a good while now — 56% of you have bought more than nine copies since May last year. Welcome aboard to the other half of you who caught on to CRASH more recently. Nice to have you with us. One thing that really should stop is all this sharing of copies of CRASH — surely you want your very own copy to treasure for evermore (thereby making your contribution to the Editor's Beer Fund). Fortunately, no-one in the sample of 500 readers we examined actually allowed ten people to read their copy of CRASH, but fifty of you naughty peoples said nine people read your copy regularly! Maybe we could go for the million after all, if only we could persuade you generous types to be a bit meaner . . .

In terms of the popularity of other computer magazines, after CRASH, **Sinclair User** came out tops, collecting 27% of the votes and pipping its stablemate **Computer and Video Games** into second place (25% of the fave rave vote). **Your Sinclair** was only just third, with 23% and then it was right down to 7% of the vote for **Popular Computing Weekly** and **Computer Gamer**, followed by **ZX Computing** and **Personal Computer World** with 6% and 5% respectively.

An awful lot of you intend buying another computer in the next twelve months — 128K Spectrums, or are there a couple of putative (LMLWD) Cray owners out there? 76% of the respondents in the sample, claim to have plans for a new computer. Hmm . . . maybe their Spetrums are getting tired with all the games they play.

Not too surprisingly, Playing Tips came top again in the prioritised list of your favourite bits of CRASH, followed by arcade reviews, previews and competitions. Lloyd has carved a nice solid niche for himself, with Merely Mangram coming in in fifth place and the Forum in sixth. Down at the bottom of the class were Frontline, Hall of Slime and Bugbox.

We seem to have cracked the ratings problem to most people's satisfaction. A massive 87% of you reckoned the rating system was good and absolutely no-one thought it was bad. 81% agree with the ratings 'Quite Often', and again, no one ever disagrees totally. When it comes to buying games, 84% of you, in total, are influenced 'Quite Often' or 'Every Time' by CRASH ratings and a couple of people (literally) claim never to be influenced — perhaps they never actually BUY games. Bad fellows!

As to the reviews themselves, the solid weight of opinion fell behind the way we are doing things at the moment, with a few people thinking we ought to do less of things. Most of the respondents reckon we've got it right in terms of length, amount of reviewers opinion and detail but the same group of people want more screenshots. We'll see what we can do, but Cameron (our ace lensperson) is already struggling with a bit of an ego problem having sneaked into the photocaptions, and he's kept very busy as it is.

In terms of your comments, we haven't had time to do a full analysis of the 500 forms we've looked at — the Database is great on sums and numbers but has all the intelligence of a ZZAP! reviewer when it comes to understanding English! A couple of choice comments pop out of the general sea of opinions about percentage systems and ratings though, including one wally who asked for a rating on the price. Wot's VALUE FOR MONEY THEN. Never mind. A few folks came up with "Include me as a reviewer", not unreasonably; one person asked us to include the maker's opinion while another said "don't let the adverts bias you!!". Someone else asked for ten reviewers opinions on each game. AAAAARGH!

Lloyd's photographic image seems to be one of the additional features CRASH readers crave — one chap wanted a 12 foot poster of Lloyd, no less! More Maps and Tips is a popular request, and there are quite a few calls for more serious programming articles. Just about everyone in the sample seems to want more of existing features or new features to be included rather than less of anything that's going on between the CRASH covers at the moment. Much pondering will follow over the next few weeks and we'll do our best to heed your wishes.

Well, there you go. A quick taste of your opinions to be going on with — with luck, and if everything goes according to PLAN A, we should be able to reveal the full analysis of CRASHTIONNAIRE '86 next month, and share the well kept secret of what CRASH readers drink!



ADVERTISERS' INDEX

THE MONTHLY SOFTWARE STAR FOR YOUR US GOLD CALENDAR





SUGARING SINCLAIR'S BITTER PILL?

It was a supremely logical move, really, the liaison between the boffin and the barrow boy.

Sir Clive Sinclair's commercial past, not without its successes, has followed an erratic and at times traumatic course. His talent for innovation has never been in dispute — his technological advances have contributed a great deal to the quality of life, if not exactly to the fabric of society, and his inventing career began while he was still in his teens.

Alan Sugar was another teenager who showed promise — starting out as a street trader selling car aerials he has applied his marketing expertise consistently well, arranging for products that people want, to be manufactured at a price they trip over themselves to pay. Now Alan Sugar is personally worth over two hundred million pounds, and heads up a remarkably successful company.

Clive Sinclair's computer products are now owned and will soon be sold by Amstrad, who can apply their marketing genius to the fruits of Sinclair's hardware genius. The £5million cash Amstrad stumped up for the intellectual and marketing rights for Sinclair's computers represents a bargain — there's little doubt that Amstrad should be able to recoup their investment within twelve months. Even if Amstrad have to spend a further ten or eleven million pounds for the stocks, work in progress and commited orders under the terms of the agreement announced on 7th April, they have still got a remarkably good deal. A total investment of some £15million for the Sinclair name, the existing range of Sinclair computers and the first option on any new computer related products from the Sinclair stable wasn't too painful a commitment for Amstrad to make, considering their profits for the last six months of 1985 weighed in over the £27million mark.

Not so long ago Clive Sinclair was firmly in the limelight, knighted, invited to Downing Street to give his opinions on technology, head of a roaringly successful computer company and personally worth so many millions they were hardly worth counting. Clive Sinclair was firmly in the public eye. Most people had heard of Amstrad, but Alan Sugar was hardly a household name.

Now the tables have turned. Alan Sugar is personally worth more than twice as much as Sir Clive ever was, heads a company which dominates the UK home computer market (amongst other things) and is the Golden Boy of City Institutions who are knocked out by Amstrad's escalating profit figures. Sir Clive Sinclair is returning to the research that is included in the title of his company. Sinclair Research has done the honourable thing, arranged to pay off all its debts and left the home computer market. Sir Clive retains rights to the pocket television and has set up two companies under the wing of Sinclair Research to develop wafer scale integrated circuits and telecommunications products.

Apart from the commercial sense involved in buying up a competitor whose share of the market — entertainment computers — your company covets, Amstrad may have had another reason for acquiring a ready-made product range. The QL, is likely to be scrapped or sold off. Amstrad has control over the Spectrum 48, PLUS and 128 and has first option on the Pandora. Maybe Amstrad's involvement with the Spectrum will provide the answer to many a Spectrum owner's dream — disc drives at a reasonable price.

Admittedly three and half inch drives for the Spectrum were announced a few weeks before the Amstrad takeover. But it just might fit in with Amstrad's plans to add three inch drives, as used in their existing range of computers, to the Spectrum. They have the purchasing power to market the appropriate drive and interface for a price that competes favourably with the Interface 1 and Microdrive set-up. Amstrad's new machine, compatible with the IBM PC has to use five and a quarter inch drives. The fact that Amstrad's next machine will not be incorporating three inch drives could possibly have contributed to the continuing reluctance of disc manufacturers to increase production of the three inch medium. Perhaps the Sinclair tie-in will be used by Amstrad as a carrot to nudge disc manufacturers into ending the current, painful shortage of three inch discs. An end to the shortage of three inch discs would have immense benefits for Amstrad themselves, software houses and users of Amstrad machines.

And with Amstrad's new found commitment to entertainment computing centred on their new acquisition, the Spectrum, the games playing world could be in for a boost. There's no reason why the board in the basic 48K machine couldn't be dropped into a case which included a joystick interface, cassette deck or disc drive and didn't have a keyboard. A games console, no more and no less. The same board could be an add-on for Amstrad's IBM lookalike and other machines in its range, sold as a peripheral which gave the serious users Amstrad likes to feel it has snapped up fancy a bit of light entertainment.

"Nothing ever goes the way I plan it", Sir Clive said at the press conference called to announce the sale of Sinclair's computer rights to Amstrad. In the long run, for Spectrum games players and everyone else involved in the market, it's unlikely he could have planned it better.

INDEX TO GAMES REVIEWED IN THIS ISSUE



Gorgeous pouting monthly CRASH . . . *No Stoppit now. Right this instant. We'll have none of that sort of thing in THIS magazine, thankyouverymuch.*
Hannah Smith has travelled all the way from sunny Weston super Mare (gateway to somewhere or other down south) to sunny Ludlow (gateway to the Welsh Marches, whatever they might be). She's joined the CRASH team as a Staff Writer with special responsibilities for organising the software reviews. No doubt you'll be reading a lot more of her over the coming months. Welcome to CRASH, Hannah, and it's your turn to chip in for the Tea Kitty . . .



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If it had happened a week earlier we'd all have though it was an April Fool but at the hastily called press conference at noon on 7th April there was no laughter — just the smiling face of Amstrad's Alan Sugar and the slightly more restrained features of Sir Clive Sinclair.

SIR CLIVE SINCLAIR RESIGNS FROM THE HOME COMPUTER MARKET

John Minson rushed off to the press conference at which the £5million sale of Sinclair Computers was announced . . .



"Amstrad Consumer Electronics PLC today announced that it has purchased from Sinclair Research Ltd the worldwide rights to sell and manufacture all existing and future Sinclair computers and computer products, together with the Sinclair brand name and those intellectual property rights where they relate to computers and computer related products."

That's how the Amstrad press release puts it and the wording of Sinclair's statement is expectedly similar, but what does it actually mean for us, the consumers? Will our beloved Spectrums somehow transform themselves overnight into abominable Amstrads? Nothing so dramatic. Instead, any Sinclair machine you buy from now on will carry the old logo, and for the near future will be identical to any other Sinclair product — only the profits will go to Amstrad who will also be responsible for all backup support, marketing and so on. Effectively, Sir Clive has said goodbye to the company that bears his name and has brought him so successfully into the public gaze.

£5 MILLION CASH

In exchange for the sale of these rights Sir Clive has received £5million and Amstrad will also purchase existing stocks and have agreed to take over outstanding sales commitments. Sinclair's financial problems have made headlines recently — indeed some quarters of the press displayed indecent haste in putting the boot in when the one time hero of the British Hi Tech proved all too human — but at the conference Sir Clive was quick to assure questioners that the deal with Amstrad will write off all debts, which stood at £6 or 7 million a few weeks before. He denies that it is a rescue deal, though. Faced with the choice of taking on a large investment and competing directly with the other computer companies or selling the traditional business operation, Sinclair had no hesitation in choosing the latter.

Alan Sugar is undoubtedly an expert in the traditional business of marketing — witness the success of the Amstrad computers, which have only been around for two years. Last year Amstrad sold 750,000 units and they aim to sell over a million this time round. Meanwhile Sinclair sold 400,000 units last year — which Amstrad now intends to add to its figures. Why then should Amstrad want to purchase Sinclair?

Back at the 128 Spectrum launch in February, Sir Clive Sinclair made a comment that amused me and several others. He claimed that the Amstrad machines were having their major success in the business field while Sinclair was placing itself firmly behind the games market. It was amusing, because apart from the PCW 8256, Amstrad have carved their position in the entertainment market too, and Sinclair have in the past made claims for their machines' serious applications. Now Sir Clive claims that the new deal was only thought up four to five weeks ago, when Michael Langdon of Price Waterhouse, representing Sinclair, approached Amstrad, but his statement almost two months ago is uncannily similar to Alan Sugar's reasons given at the formal announcement that he had acquired his onetime competitor's business.

MARKET DOMINATION

"We have recognised that Sinclair Computers have dominated the entertainment market in Europe for the last few years. We always viewed our computers as a step up from the entertainment market." Sugar was keen to quote the Japanese market to us, in which games are just beginning to flourish. He sees home entertainment as far from dead, saying that for every eleven year old who gets fed up with his Spectrum and discards it to gather dust under his bed, there is a ten year old ready to get into computing. Whether the average Sinclair owner would like to be seen in this light is open to question!

But Alan Sugar recognises the seasonal nature of this particular market — one of the factors that came near to sinking Sinclair — which means that Amstrad will aim to "ramp up" the entertainment side for the four or five months a year when it's big business. The metaphor that he repeatedly drew on was Boots changing its window display from sun tan oil to cough syrup! This is likely to mean a much more prominent advertising profile for Sinclair, including television airtime, and improved export performance. Amstrad already sells 68% of its product overseas and shares distributors with Sinclair in many European countries. One notable exception is Spain where the 128 Spectrum was first launched, and it seems likely that that machine's future is limited. Sugar says that he envisages £139 as a fit starting point for a pricing policy.

PRODUCT ENHANCEMENT

The other key part of Amstrad's strategy for Sinclair is "enhancement". It is a term that Alan Sugar used frequently and seems to cover everything from quality control to cosmetic redesign. Recognising that one of the greatest virtues of the Spectrum is the vast backup of software, and that this means that it is an excellent machine for export, it looks as if any changes made will leave the operating system unaltered. Instead they will be aimed at reliability.

Sinclair have had an uncertain reputation for product reliability, while this is an area in which Amstrad have prided themselves. Alan Sugar is obviously keen for Sinclair machines to continue be assembled in the United Kingdom, by Timex, Thorn and AB Electronics, but the quality control will be improved; he also emphasised the need to minimise other potential problems. His stated belief is, that with an entertainment machine, the user should be able to plug in and switch on. The liklihood of an Amstrad style built-in tape recorder seems strong, though the inclusion of a monitor is less likely as this would be too much of a trespass into Amstrad territory, according to Sugar.

He was keen to place part of the blame for complaints about the machines with Software companies, who in pushing the

Spectrum to its limits fail to take note of its hardware specification and are eventually caught out by compatibility problems when the machine is upgraded. This happened with the series 2 and 3 Spectrums, and more recently with top titles that refused to run on the 128. The public's first reaction is to blame Sinclair.

BIG BROTHER?

Alan Sugar's proposed solution to the problem is to set up an organisation that will provide free guidance for software houses and will provide them with an endorsement of their products's suitability for the machine. Hand in hand with this, advertising will try to persuade the public not to buy programs that do not carry the official badge. Whether this is a good thing is obviously open to question. Despite programs that have "misused" the Spectrum's operating system, it is this adventurousness on the part of programmers to boldly go where others though impossible that has lead to the wealth of games that obtain staggering results out of the humble machine.

Whatever changes Amstrad make, whether they be of the "sticking on" of a tape recorder or the slapping of hands of programmers who do not obey the letter of the law, they're unlikely to come into force before this Christmas, though we should start to see the effects of the first of them before the year is out — and if Amstrad were to include the addition of a joystick port I can't see cries of horror from any but the most conservative Sinclair owner.

BYE BYE QL

What though, of Sir Clive's other computer? The QL has not been produced for the last two to three months anyhow, and although Amstrad will provide full after sales service, Alan Sugar says that because of bad publicity in the past he cannot see a future for it. If it should be reborn at some stage it would probably be with a disc drive. Discs were mentioned again later in the conference when Sugar stated that the success of providing games on discs for the Amstrad range meant that a Spectrum drive would be a distinct possibility. This, one can only speculate, marks the end of the Microdrive.

Meanwhile Sinclair Research Limited are all set to head off in the direction where their greatest strength has always been — a course many people say they should have followed all along. They will originate ideas. Currently they are floating off areas for research in the hope



Alan Sugar

that eventually they will become separate companies. The major new satellite companies are concerned with wafer-scale semiconducters, based at the Metalab with money from Barclays bank, and a Winchester based business dealing with telecommunications, though Sir Clive was wary about saying anything about the backers here. A cordless telephone is a year away from the market. Sinclair will also be providing development teams to work with international companies on specific projects.

PANDORA'S BOX

Under the terms of the deal, no new computers can carry the Sinclair name other than ones from Amstrad. Sinclair are continuing to work on their long awaited portable, the Pandora, and this, like any other computer products from Sinclair Research, will be offered to Amstrad first on a royalty basis. It seems likely that the Pandora's Box will eventually be opened.

Alan Sugar, meanwhile, mentioned the possibility of using the Sinclair name on non-computer products. While a calculator under this logo would make sense, the idea of a Sinclair Stack stereo system for £99.95 including VAT may seem a little strange to some, but HiFi was where Sinclair started ....

Sir Clive refused to be drawn by the questioners who asked him for an ephitaph for Sinclair, but whether this is a death or not, it is certainly the end of an era. Sinclair were definitely in need of marketing skills, Amstrad undoubtedly have them. Let us hope that they treat the name they have acquired with respect. After all, it has been around a lot longer than they have, and without Sinclair it is unlikely that there would be a home computer market in Britain for Amstrad to dominate.



N·E·W·S I·N·P·U·T··



FEAR AND LOATHING
In Search of a Story

JOHN MINSON, our man with an overdraft, goes on a Scandanavian sortie, braving seasickness on an empty stomach . . .

I think that we should make one or two things clear right now. This has been a very hard month indeed. There have been virtually no launches — at least none to which I was invited — and that meant no free lunches. Which means the London Desk has gone hungry this month and there's not that much scandal or hard news.

The copy date for these words passed ages ago, so let's talk about lateness which seems to have become an industry trend, and nowhere more so than in Manchester. Of course that should come as no surprise as the software business now seems to consist almost solely of members of the Mancunian Mafia. (*What about us, then pal?* — **The Godmother, Ludlow Mafia**).

At last, this month I had a copy of the long awaited *Superbowl* in my hands. Only it didn't play properly. Phone calls north illuminated the situation. Yes, it was bugged. No, Ocean were not putting it out in this form and would I refrain from reviewing it, please. Congratulations for not dumping the product on the public — the temptation must be there — but really, it's now so long since this year's feeble final and all the Channel 4 hoo ha, wouldn't it be better to drop all reference to Super Bowl XX when the game finally appears?

ROCKING HORRIBLY

Seeking relaxation and sorely in need of a lunch, I made a date to meet eligible Solution Public Relations Supremo Michael Baxter in a pub. What an excellent PR person Michael is. He's a genuinely friendly guy, so that when he slips you the old Mickey Finn — the information about the new product — you don't feel to desperately bad about it. But no new product news this time. Instead a good old drinking session followed by a Chinese meal. And then the moment of inspiration! The Rocky Horror Picture Show! Late showing at the Cannon Cinema, Praed Street.

Anybody who has just played the computer game (from CRL) cannot know the sheer joy of shouting insults at the screen during a showing of this deep and moving masterpiece of cinematic art. A seasoned Rocky Horror cultist, I joined in with the best of them. Poor Baxter, though. I don't think the PR world had prepared him for the experience of a crazed computer journalist going gonzo in the seat to his right at one o'clock in the morning. I've not seen him since, but Michael, if you're reading this, let me warn you — it's catching. Who knows, you might one day feel the urge to dance The Timewarp in the aisle of some sleaze pit in the early hours of the morning.

ARIOLASOFT TIE-IN?

Days later, and with no little trouble I managed to blag my way into Ariolasoft's exclusive office warming party. This was all thanks to the lovely Amanda Barry, who I'm glad to say had escaped from the tree to which the two cowboys had tied her. And if that means nothing to you, then you don't read CRASH carefully enough. Mandy — for it was she — subjected herself to this humiliating spectacle merely so that the hacks of the micro market could drool over the resulting publicity photo.

Nobody got tied to anything at this gig. And Covent Garden's Long Acre is definitely a step up from the romantically named Asphalt House that used to be Ariolasoft's home. In fact, the new offices seemed to be very spacious indeed, though I soon realised that was mainly because they'd sensibly not moved the furniture in. After all, who'd really want to start work at a new desk over which some inebriated journalist had liberated his lunch?

It wasn't just journos, either. A small, but select party from other software houses had been invited. I don't imagine that they, too, will rush out and hire themselves luxury office space though. The good Doctor, Tim Langdell of Softek and The Edge is already Covent Garden based and Mikro-Gen have just brought their whole operation together under one roof in sunny Bracknell at the heart of Britain's Silicon Valley.

It wasn't me who managed to get the most paralytic, for a change. A representative of a rival organ was last seen making for the safety and stability of his office floor to escape the sensation that the world was rocking on its axis. En route he attacked a car, almost starting a fight with its owner who understandably didn't take kindly to having his doors kicked as he rounded an island! Ahh — such are the evils of drink, but do not worry, anonymous inebriate (LMLWD x2), your reputation is safe with me. For the time being!

ALL AFLOAT

After this triumph, I decided to go for the double with an invite for the Golden Jockstrap — er Joystick — awards. But alas, it was not to be. The excuse that they were holding the ceremonies on a boat chugging up and down the Thames was used to bar me from the proceedings. Never mind, though. It seems the great and wonderful Rod Cousens of Electric Dreams had to hire a launch so he could chase after the floating party and plead for a boarding pass! So what if we had gone down — with all those software chiefs on board, it might have been a great service to the population at large!

What to do? The wanderlust was upon me. Only one thing for it: fall back upon the old expense account. The London Desk was about to go International — or Swedish at least. It may surprise many of you out there, that despite an alleged drink problem (actually, no problem till the fifteenth Bloody M when I tend to pour it down my shirt front rather than into my mouth), somebody has seen fit to love me. And it just so happens that this Light of My Life lives out in the land of Hurdi-Gurdi and smoked herrings.

So onto the phone. "Graeme, I feel the need to conduct an in depth investigation of the Swedish software scene."

"Have you been drinking again?"

"No — seriously — it's a fascinating topic."

"We won't pick up the tab." (Always a good joker, old Graeme.)

"Sorry, can't stop to discuss it — got a plane to catch."

HEMDATOR HACKING!

I actually did find a software shop in Stockholm. It was full of Commodores. As far as I can gather, Sinclair's finest doesn't seem to have made mighty inroads to Scandanavia. A profusion of business machines and serious software made me wonder if the Swedish reputation for being boring wasn't without some foundation. What was really missing was the expert opinion of Bo Jangeborg, the demon programmer of *Fairlight*, *The Artist* and author of *Fairlight II*, *The Artist II*, *The Writer* and all that other good stuff that the Good Doctor of Softek/The Edge keeps promising us . , . . but we're back to lateness, and I decided not to phone Bo in case it delayed him further!

Instead, I picked up the first issue of a Swedish computer mag, going by the grabby name of **Hemdator Hacking**. Despite the impenetrable nature of the native tongue, it was interesting to see how universal a language home computing is. There they were — familiar products like the excellent Saga Keyboards and the AMX Mouse. And there were all the same game titles . . . well, with one or two exceptions. There at Number 42 in the chart was Aacksoft's game *Oh S••t!*. I guess it's a s**t em up, *(my asterisks in deference to all those readers we upset so badly 20 months ago — shocked Ed)* but as it is produced for the decadent tastes of MSX-owners, who can tell?

If I get out of here in time, I'll be back to cover the forthcoming Hewson launch — always a favourite. But if not, tell mother I died inebriated!

Hunter S Minson

SAM FOX STRIP POKER

Producer: Martech
Retail price: **£8.95**

Okay you 'fellas' you all know **Samantha Fox**, right. You've ogled at her pictures, watched her on television chat shows, listened to her record. Now play her at strip poker. Well, it's not really Sam Fox, but your humble Spectrum who plays the game and supplies pictures of the lumpy page three girl. *Samantha Fox Strip Poker* plays you at the classic Seven Card Stud poker game. Both you and the computer start with 999 credits apiece and you must win as many points as you can by betting on your cards. Every time you reduce the computer's points by one hundred you are rewarded with a digitised picture of Sam Fox taking her clothes off, starting with her gloves at 800 points then the rest of her clothing piece by piece... If she starts winning back the lost points then her clothing is retrieved and if you start losing points then she starts ordering *you* to take your clothes off, whether you comply or not is another matter.

The game is controlled by two keys — one to choose one of the options presented after a dealing and the other to select it. The game is made foolproof by the computer referee who only gives the options relevant for that go, eliminating any mistakes which could otherwise be made.

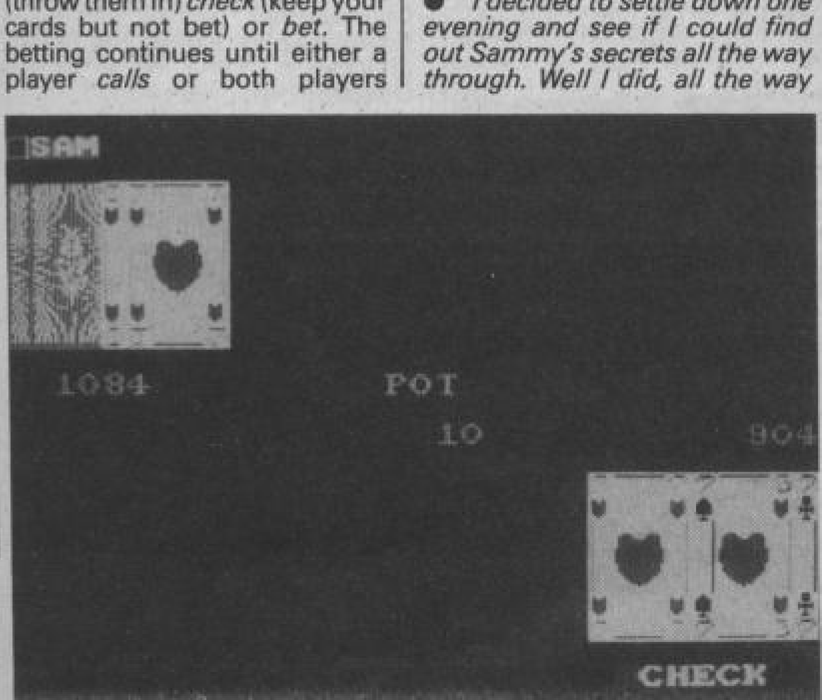
For the uninitiated Seven Card Stud is a game where the player has to try to make the best hand possible out of the seven cards dealt, the best hand winning the 'pot'. When a hand starts the player is dealt three cards, the third being dealt face upwards so your opponent can see it. From these three cards you must decide whether to *pass* (throw them in) *check* (keep your cards but not bet) or *bet*. The betting continues until either a player *calls* or both players *check*. When that happens a further card is dealt and the betting continues. If you have what you think is a jolly good hand then you can up the stakes by *raising*. The game follows this pattern until all seven cards have been dealt, then the betting continues until a player *calls*, then both hands are shown and the best hand winds the pot. Throughout a hand there is the option to *pass* and other relevant options can be chosen if desired.

On the 'B' side of the cassette is an added bonus. No Sam Fox, but a four player Seven Card Stud poker game. The rules are the same but here you can play against up to three computer opponents. In this game there are another two options — *auto* where the computer takes a decision for you and *demo*, very useful if you're new to poker and want to see what the game is about (try playing two computer players against one another).

CRITICISM

● **"I must admit that I find computer poker games boring and pointless, it's much more fun playing with humans. As for getting a page three model to officially endorse a 'strip' poker game, what a con. What you get is a very good poker game with a couple of crummy digitised pictures of Sam Fox 'stripping off'— wow! Why not just buy The Sun for a week and you can ogle at the pictures there — they're of far better quality and a lot cheaper. The whole thing somehow seems rather tasteless. Still, for poker fans, there's at least the consolation of the game itself, and this will probably prove worthwhile."**

● *"I decided to settle down one evening and see if I could find out Sammy's secrets all the way through. Well I did, all the way*







through, right to the Page 3 picture at the end when Sam ended up bust (no pun intended). Despite the obvious enjoyment, I was glad I hadn't bought the game — finishing it on the first session was a bit of a shame — not my idea of value for money, but I was very lucky: no-one else in the office got further than the second picture. The game itself is very good and contains some lovely detailed cards and a nice smooth dealing sequence. If I wanted to be niggly I could say it takes a bit long before your turn comes round, but as a card game this is one of the best and Sam Fox Poker *is a must for all Sam Fox fans. Surely the sequel must be animated with a print-out option! "*

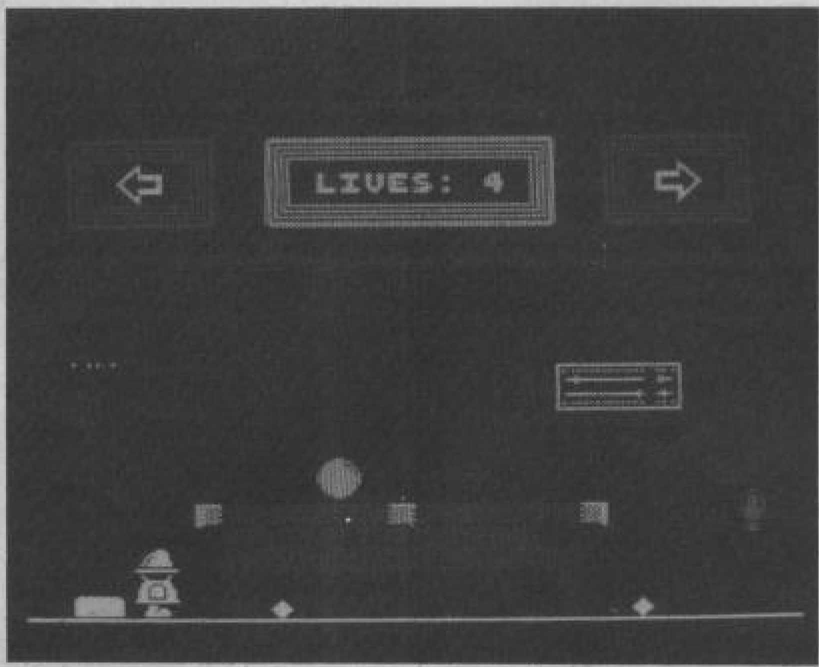
● " Usually I really enjoy computer card games, in this case however even with the promise of seeing Sam Fox's naughty bits I wasn't really compelled to stick with it until I had mastered the game. The input is pretty limited so I didn't really ever feel that I was in total control of my game, it would have been nice to raise the betting by a couple of hundred 'credits' for instance. The graphical representation of the cards on screen is fair but they could be a little larger or a little more detailed, Sam herself is fairly well drawn but she has lost whatever she had, during the conversion onto computer. The sound also leaves a little to be desired as there is only one tune and a few spot FX here and there. The main moan I have about both these games is that they are very slow, there is always a long pause between goes, so interest is lost very quickly. Generally I don't think Sam's pixels are worth the nine quid being asked. "

COMMENTS

Control keys: SPACE to cycle options, ENTER to choose it
Joystick: not needed
Keyboard play: very simple, fine
Use of colour: as you might expect for a card game
Graphics: the pictures of Sammy are reasonably good, cards very good
Sound: thin version of 'The Entertainer' and a few bloops
Skill levels: one
General rating: Mixed feelings, obviously, but Sam's endorsement seems to conceal a well presented poker game worth the attention of card players.

Use of computer	75%
Graphics	68%
Playability	79%
Getting started	77%
Addictive qualities	68%
Value for money	62%
Overall	72%

INCREDIBLE SHRINKING FIREMAN



Producer: Mastertronic
Retail price: **£1.99**
Author: **A Mitchell and Dave K**

We begin the sad tale of shuffling, shrunken, Sid. Why is he shrunken I hear you cry? Well, Sid was a fearless fireman until one day when he was fighting a blazing fire in a vast shrinking factory. Not looking where he was going, Sid toppled head first into a powerful shrinking machine. Life's not much fun when you're less than a foot high so the object of this game is to some how unshrink poor shuffling Sid.

You can restore Sid to his former glory by stretching him which sounds rather painful. To do this you must find the five parts of the stretching rack and put it back together, and once you have done this Sid should return to his original size.

Sid scampers from room to room in a seemingly endless building searching for the various parts of the stretching machine. The rooms are filled with a strange array of furniture ranging from snooker tables to fire engines, and smaller objects such as French onions, digital watches and fire hoses. However useless they may appear some do have a purpose. Certain objects collected enable you to move from room to room, whereas some are numbered parts of the stretching machine. These are obviously the ones to go for. Sid, however can only carry five objects with him as he scuttles around, resulting in the usual swapping business and retracing your steps to collect again a useful object dropped earlier.

When you come across an object on the floor you have several options. Sid can either just pick it up and continue or he can identify it and then decide whether he wants it or not. He can also discard any unwanted objects at this point.

Some ceilings can be bounced clean through leading into previously uncharted rooms or into the Shrinking Plant which is where Sid finds the various parts for his stretching rack.

As well as collecting different objects, Sid must also keep an eye open for the various ghoulies and ghosties that haunt the complex. These come in several forms and are easily identifiable by their sinister appearance. They either destroy Sid outright or gradually sap his energy levels, reducing his four lives with every encounter.

Will Sid be able to locate the stretching machine before his lives expire or will he remain Shuffling Sid, the Incredible Shrunken Fireman forever? As usual — it's up to you.

CRITICISM

● **" A fireman, yes. Shrinking, yeah, he's pretty small. Incredible, though, ha ain't! Apart from the price,** Incredible Shrinking Fireman **is pretty average, run of the mill stuff, nothing special or surprising. THe select system has its similarities to** Spellbound**'s Windowvision, but is nowhere near as polished or good to use. The graphics aren't astounding but colour is used well and some of the inanimate objects are neat. I'm tempted to say 'another one for the budget bin', but it's not that bad, so I'll restrain myself. "**

● *" With a name like that, this game had to come from the masters of value — Mastertronic. Apart from the jolly title and the jolly graphics I'm afraid this is just another arcade adventure (groans)! But I must say I quite enjoyed* The Incredible Shrinking Fireman, *mainly on account of the beautifully drawn graphics and the different type of pick up/put down menu which added something different to the game (although I can't quite say what). I must admit the scenario is one that I've never heard of before, and it will probably catch the younger Spectrum owner's eye. I've nearly run out of things to say about arcade adventures — but if you want something that will take your mind up a different path to the usual pick up/puzzle game, then* The Incredible Shrinking Fireman *could well be a good bet at the moment. "*

● " Mastertronic have come up with another jolly arcade/adventure budget games which is quite fun. Many of their games lack great graphics but this one seems to be reasonable in that department. The game play is fun indeed, wandering around the rooms looking for the objects and advoiding the not too many 'nasty' sprites. *Fireman* has some nice touches like when you are killed and 'game over' flashes across the screen. However, I found the game didn't get me very hooked and I wouldn't bother playing it many times. "

COMMENTS

Control keys: definable
Joystick: Kempston, Interface 2, Cursor, Fuller
Keyboard play: simple and effective
Use of colour: bright and distinctive
Graphics: large, detailed and smooth moving
Sound: average
Screens: lots
General rating: not one of Mastertronic's best, but still reasonable.

Use of computer	65%
Graphics	78%
Playability	68%
Getting started	77%
Addictive qualities	66%
Value for money	72%
Overall	68%

MAX HEADROOM

Producer: Quicksilva
Retail price: **£9.95**
Author: **Binary Design**

Max Headroom has been kidnapped from Big Time Television by Network 23 to feature exclusively on their new Videvert Show. You must assist top TV reporter Edison Carter and his controller Theora Jones rescue the Max Personality from Network 23's, vast computer, concealed within their huge 211 floor building. Naturally Network 23 are going all out to stop this by way of a series of elaborate seucurity systems.

Theora has a 'Maxhunter' program which should hopefully help Edison break into these security systems.

First he must gain control of the lifts so he can gain access to the Executive floors in the building. This is achieved by short circuiting the LED code in the lift, which comes in the form of a 7 segment digital display. A time limit is imposed on this code cracking during which the segments gradually lose their brightness. If at the end of the time limit an 'E' is left illuminated then you have cracked the code and Theora has gained control of the lifts and Edison Carter can continue with his mission.

Edison is now on the Executive levels of Network 23's skyscraper. But before he can continue he must break the codes on this level so that Theora can gain control of the camera systems, and lifts and also gain access to the offices on the Executive floors. The security system flashes a sequence of lights and plays a corresponding tune which muct be remembered and the sequence entered in reverse. Failure at this makes the search of the Executive floors much harder because Theora can't use the security cameras to check for security guards and robots.

Edison has now managed to find his way to the Presidential floor. Before he can enter this level (where Max is being held captive) he must break the Presidential code. For security reasons only the President of Network 23 holds this code. However this eight digit hexadecimal code has been split into four 2-digit components. Edison must find the four separate parts of the hexadecimal digits to crack the code. The chances of guessing the code are estimated at several billion to one, say Network 23.

However once Edison is on the Presidential suite he still has to rescue Max from the com puter lab, and this involves breaking more codes. Even after Max has been rescued the game doesn't really end until they are outside the building.

The whole mission is aginst the clock — you only have six hours in which to assist Edison and Theora rescue Max. Apart from racing aginst time, you also have Edison's confidence levels to contend with. He starts the game with 99% self confidence, but as he is jostled and bumped by the security robots, who shoot at anything that moves, this level gradually drops until he dies. This % is shown on a chart at the bottom of the screen. Edison's confidence levels can be restored by allowing him brief rests but you lose time if you do this too often. Apart from the security guards and robots, Breughel and Mahler, the two sinister and thoroughly amoral assasins hired by Network 23 to kill Edison, are also out and about. Watch out for messages from Theora concerning the whereabouts of this gruesome pair.

CRITICISM

● **" The plot is great, the graphics are great, the game is fantastic. Before I saw** Max Headroom **I was puzzled at what Quicksilva would base the game on, but they have thought up a brilliant plot with instructions that set the atmosphere before you've even seen the game — just reading them got me intrigued and made me want to start playing immediately. The game follows on from the film very fluently, and is very similar to the film in look and drama. The only minor bad thing is that most of the floors are the same**



(but we can forgive them for that, there are over two hundred of them!). The ending is . . . well, I'd better keep quiet about that. Max Headroom could start a new branch of arcade/adventures from his game, with lots of detailed graphics, neat little tunes, a few adventure elements, icons, codes — what I'm trying to say, is this game's got the lot. One of my favourite games this year. This is one game that's worth it's above-average price: it's an above average game. "

● *" Help! Its probably me and my little brain, but I'm not half finding Edison Carter's job hard. The instructions are pleasantly readable, and attractively presented, but could be a little more revealing. Its going to keep me occupied for quite a bit of time, but if it wasn't for the CRASH preview, I'd probably have be come bored trying to work out what I was doing wrong. For ten quid, it's good value for money, and the graphics are pretty neat, but I can't play it well enough to give it that little spark of addictivity that would push it to top notch. Leave it with me for two, three weeks and maybe I'll start enjoying it a bit more. Despite that, its still pretty good. "*

● " I was really looking forward to playing this one as I am a great fan of the film and the series, after my first go I was very confused but not disappointed. Graphically there is nothing revolutionary contained within this one but it is quite neat, the green stick characters walk around smoothly and the code screens are colourful. I enjoyed playing this original game as there is plenty to do, but I can imagine it getting a little boring in the end as all of the floors are virtually the same. "

COMMENTS

Control keys: definable
Joystick: Kempston, Interface 2, Cursor
Keyboard play: a little disorientating at first
Use of colour: code sequences might make mono telly play a bit difficult, but otherwise colour is well used
Graphics: detailed, smooth, generally good
Sound: average to good
Skill levels: one
Screens: over 200
General rating: An original and entertaining arcade/adventure with plenty to do.

Use of computer	86%
Graphics	86%
Playability	84%
Getting started	79%
Addictive qualities	85%
Value for money	82%
Overall	85%

BALLBLAZER

Producer: Activision
Retail price: **£7.99**
Author: **Lucasfilm (original game) conversion by Program Techniques**

Far flung into the future is a world whose main pasttime is spectatorship of a sport kown as *Ballblazer*. This computer simulation duplicates as closely as possible the thrills, spills, rules and regulations of the famous future sport. Activision market it and it is imaginatively called *Ballblazer*. Relying heavily upon the technology of the day, each player is strapped within a ground craft called a rotofoil, a machine that land travels over the grid where the action takes place. On an extremely simple level *Ballblazer* can be described as football on a green and white chessboard.

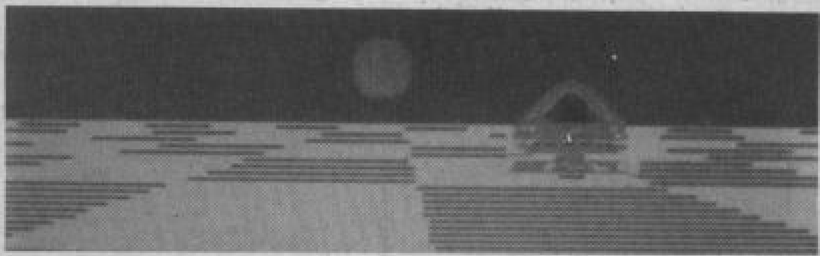
Here are two goals on the grid, one at each edge of the field, and the overall aim is to blast a floating footy, (the plasmorb) through your opponent's goalmouth. Your Rotofoil is like a great big foot that can kick and dribble the ball over the green and white terrain using a carefully controlled magnetic field that surrounds it. When the plasmorb is in proximity of a rotofoil's field it contorts to surround the object and then becomes the possesion of that player. The trouble with having an enveloped plasmorb is that it saps energy from your main supply, maximum speed becomes slightly less than it previously was. That's dribbling — kicking is a different matter. Placing a sweaty thumb upon the fire button inverts the rotofoil's bumpfield. The previously enveloped orb now rapidly whizzes off to the horizon as the bumpfield whiplashes. That's kicking, it's disadvantage is that since every action has a reaction (you ask any scientist called Newton) you and your rotofoil react by flying away in the opposite direction.

To make finding the plasmorb on the very large grid easier, a little box of circuitry always orientates the rotofoil to point as closely as it can to the ball. The rotofoil has its retstrictions though and one of them is that it's only able to face in one of four directions, the same directions that you can move over the grid. Still, the black box performs the best comprise it can given the limitations superimposed upon it. When ball is in possession the same little directional computer points the 'foil straight at the appropriate goal.

That explains *Ballblazer* with only one competitor but two are supposed to take part, be it human against human or human against droid. With two players the main problem is for the person without the plasmorb to get it and this is done by a combination of dodgem caring and field inverting. Even without a plasmorb, the bumfield can be activated and used as a sort of fist. Punch the ball into the open grid out of the opponent's magnetic embrace and it becomes property of the first player to reach it— the equivalent of a tackle.

A split screen is provided, showing each player's point of view through the rotofoil's windscreen. The grid runs off into the horizon in perspective and as the rotofoil is moved around the grid behaves as it should do in real life. The plasmorb and opposing 'foil are both shown in proper perspective and relative size respective to how close you are to them.

Between the two views is a score line showing time left to the end of the bout (a standard game is three minutes long) and each opponents' score. At the end of the three minutes the player who has dominated the most of the line is winner. A goal produces a score and the amount depends upon how far away the posts were the ball struck true. For an over the horizon shot three points are awarded.



CRITICISM

● **" Oh well I suppose I shouldn't have expected anything as good as the Atari version, but at least I thought it would be quite good. Lucasfilms' first try out on the Spectrum is not a complete success, they seem to have thrown caution to the wind and just made it look nice and pretty — unfortuanatly they forgot about the gameplay and achieved a very simplified version. Through the transalation I realised that there wasn't too much to the game to start with. The sound is pretty apalling with a very low tune which vibrates the Spetrum speaker terribly. The way the ball swings around in front of you is very good but doesn't make up for the screen gliches. The speed of the game is very slow and I didn't swing in my chair at all, which means something big has been missed out. I couldn't honsetly recommend you to buy it. "**

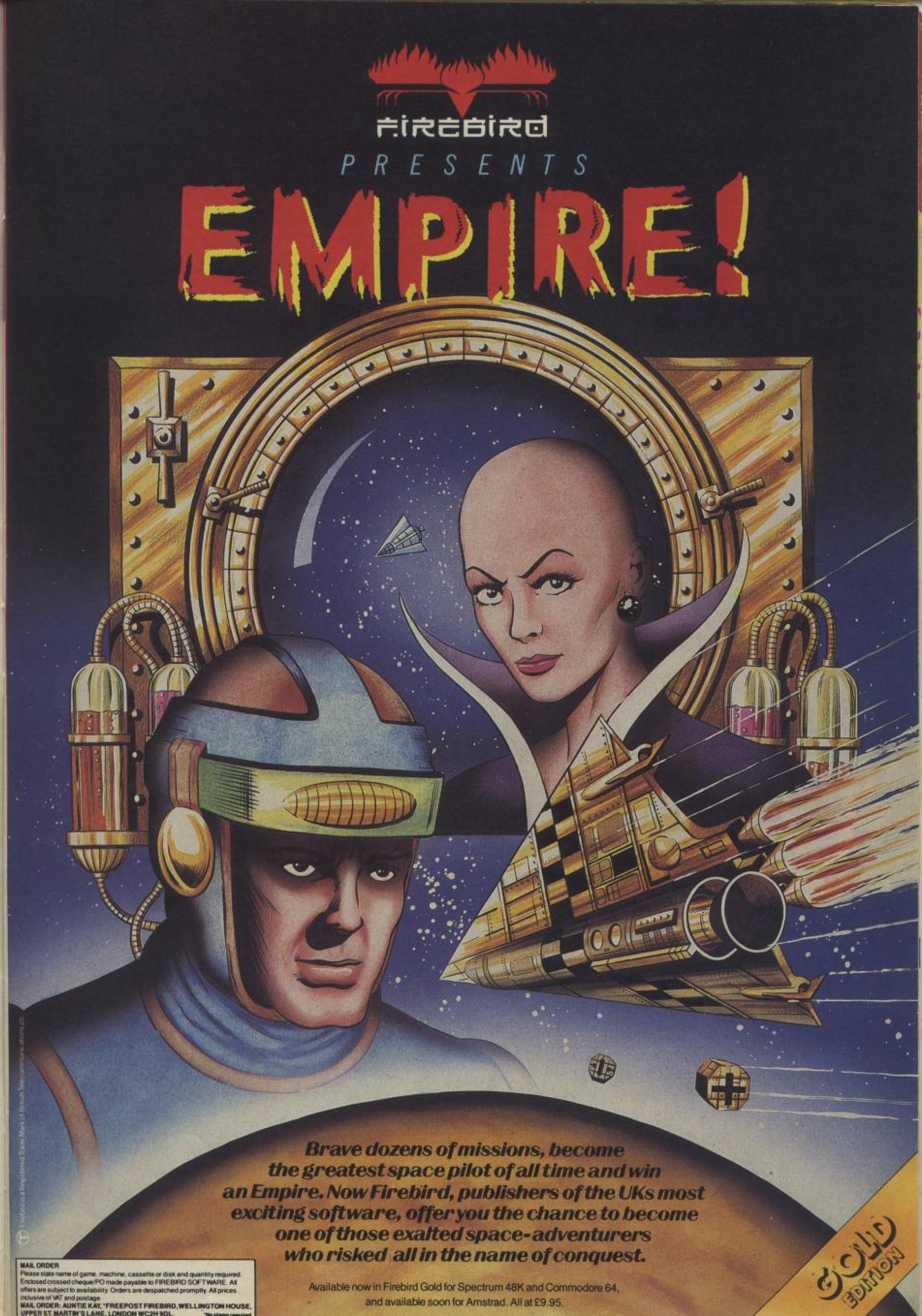
● " *Ballblazer doesn't exactly strike me as the most competitive sport in the known universe, as it's hardly mega-brill; I've heard a lot about the Atari and Commodore versions, and in comparison, the Spectrum version seems to be a bit of a letdown. The colour is lavishly used, at the expense of the whole screen changing colour at times. Things happen quickly, and on the higher levels, it gets pretty hectic. It isn't such a bad game, but not so great either.* "

● " I first saw *Ballblazer* on the Atari yonks ago and it was about the best Atari game around then. Sadly, I can't really say that it has survived the conversion onto the Spectrum. Most of the original's good points, sound etc, have been left behind for obvious reasons, now all that remains is a fairly average, speedy arcade game with a rough tune and dubious graphics. On my first few goes I was sure that something really special would come to light which would make this game doubly playable, unfortunately it didn't. The effect of the ground moving is very good even though it is a little garish at times, but, as with most games with fast graphics, all the characters flicker horribly. I wasn't really compelled to carry on playing this one as it gets fairly monotonous after a while. "

COMMENTS

Control keys: player one/player two: UP Q/P, DOWN A/L, LEFT Z/N, RIGHT M/X, FIRE C/Sym Shift. S to start
Joystick: Kempston, Interface 2, Cursor
Keyboard play: no problems
Use of colour: pretty, but lots of clashes
Graphics: neat scrolling, but a bit glitchy
Sound: a bit buzzy, but nice
Skill levels: 9
Screens: scrolling playfield
General rating: A neat reaction game which somehow doesn't quite come off

Use of computer	75%
Graphics	73%
Playability	72%
Getting started	78%
Addictive qualities	76%
Value for money	72%
Overall	71%

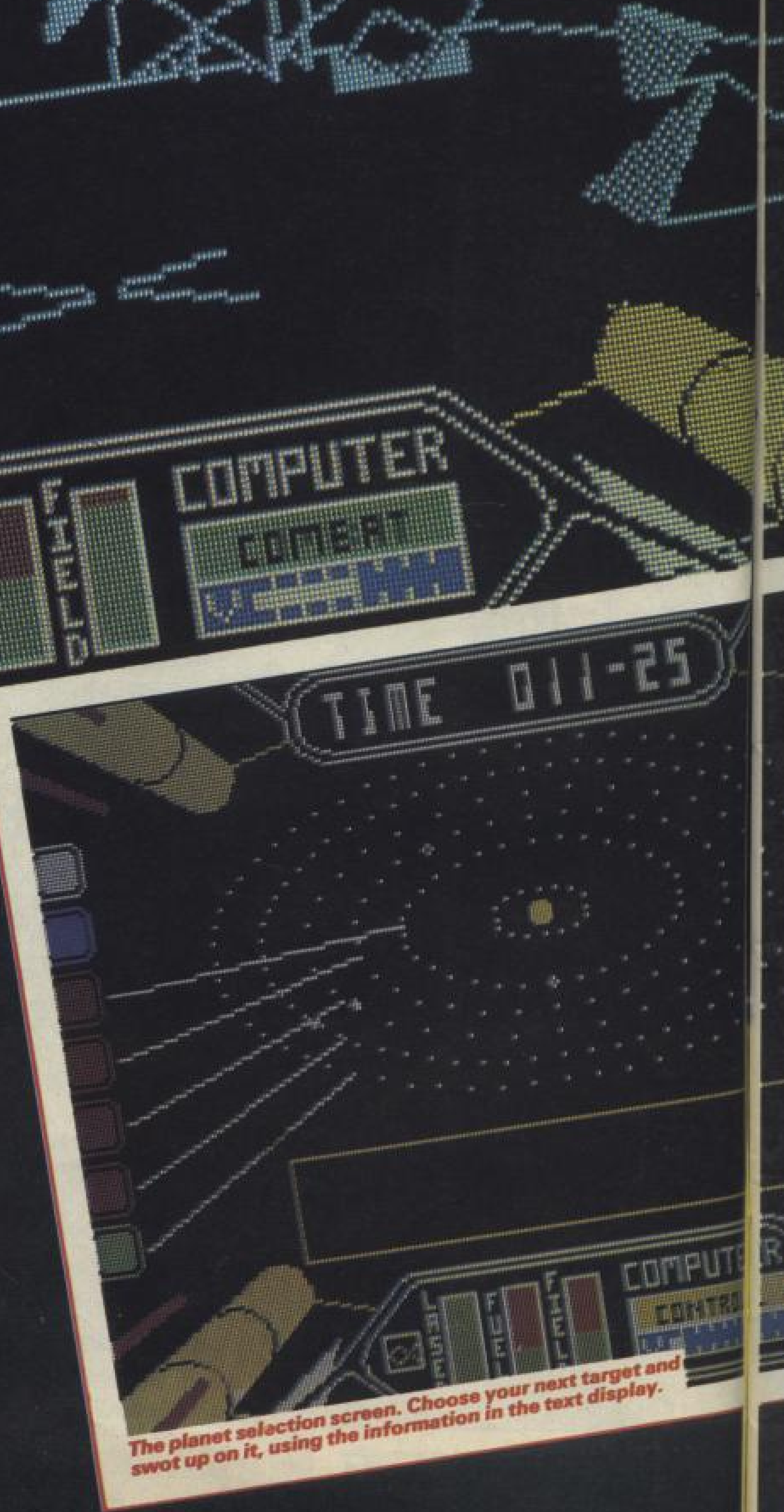

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The Ground Attack phase, where points are collected f wanton destruction of Outsider Artefacts



Producer: Realtime
Retail price: **£7.95**
Author: **Graeme Baird, Ian Onions and Ian Oliver**



The planet selection screen. Choose your next target and swot up on it, using the information in the text display.

S·T·A·R·S·T·R·I·K·E II





Shooting the pods off a Space Wheel. Blow away all five, and you get the chance to enter the hangar section

Nearly eighteen months after the fast 3D graphics in *Starstrike* stunned the Spectrum gamesplaying world, Realtime have released the sequel under the unassuming title of *Starstrike II*. The original game contained three screens of wire-frame animation and owed a fair debt to the Star Wars arcade game in terms of gameplay. Now Realtime have produced a game with filled-in 3D graphics and have come up with a totally different gameplay to go with them . . .

The scenario continues from the story told in *Starstrike*: after the Outsiders' first attack was repelled by the *Starstrike* star fleet, the aliens regrouped back to their homeworlds to plot and hatch plans anew against the Federation. Understandably narked by the constant alien threat, the Federation decides that something has to be done. A new all-purpose fighter craft is designed, the *Starstrike II* series, and is sent off to the Outsiders' homeworlds to neutralise each planet's defences.

The Outsiders realise the Federation is out to get them, and their worlds are heavily defended. Your task as pilot of a Starstrike II ship is not trivial — there are twenty two planets on the neutralisation list, and these can categorised into three different groups: Agricultural, Industrial and Military. Each type of planet has a different control system that is in charge of all the work droids on that world. Destroy the controller, and the planet becomes totally harmless.

The Outsider planets are spread across five star systems, and the first thing to do when play commences is to choose the star system on which to begin work. Your ship is not capable of hyperspace travel between star systems, and has a support module that carries fuel supplies. Once a star system has been selected, the support module makes the hyperspace jump and your ship's own hyperdrive unit can then be used to hop between planets in that system.

Your craft is equipped with the latest in shield, laser and computer technology and all you have to do is master the controls! Three meters on the control console are worth keeping

CRITICISM

"When Starstrike **was released well over a year ago I was really impressed with the smooth moving vector graphics. Now Realtime have finally got round to doing the follow up.** Starstrike II **utilises filled in 3D graphics which move quite quickly. The game itself is an improvement over the original bringing the slightly worn out shoot em up back up to date. The various stages can keep you amused for hours. I am amazed that the programmers could fit so much into the game while still keeping it graphically excellent. As with most shoot em ups** Starstrike II **is playable from the word go, but it's hard enough to keep you coming back for more and more. Few programs have impressed me this much and I'm glad to see the return of a software house that can truly program games. Buy** Starstrike II **now. It's guaranteed to provide you with hours and hours of fun."**



Inside the Ventilation Duct — it's no breeze getting through this phase of the game, as Cameron will tell you!

an eye on: fuel, shields and heat. Naturally, the fuel gauge reveals the level in the ship's tanks. The shield display shows the strength level of the complex defence fields set up around your craft. The enemy ships are quite impressively equipped as well, and with no shields a direct enemy hit entails instant death — yours. The heat meter is directly linked to the laser cannon and automatically cuts the lasers out if they get too hot. Not having much idea about space battle, the thermostat is more than likely to stop power to the guns when they're needed most. The whole game is seen through the front window of your ship with the dashboard neatly laid out along the lower part of the display. Four laser cannon are grouped around the screen, firing onto a central sight, which is also used to steer your craft.

CRITICISM

" Starstrike II **came as a real surprise. After seeing such releases as** Elite **and** I, of the Mask **it looked like three dimensional graphics had gone as far as was Spectrumly possible. Happily it looks like everyone was wrong, proven by** Starstrike II's **appearance. Images this realistic, generated as fast as this just haven't yet been seen on the Spectrum. Technolust aside, the game is great and holds your interest not just because of the way the graphics tend to get everyone ogling around the screen. There's plenty of challenge to be had, however good you seem to get. And for a mere £7.95 you just can't go wrong. Any Spectrum owner passing this by is likely to be mentally deficient! "**

A variety of defence systems have to be overcome. The Space Wheel is only present on military and a few industrial worlds, and is a giant pentagonal structure protected by defence pods. The five pods on the perimeter of a Wheel have to be blasted off as the Wheel spins in space, advancing towards you. If all five pods are shot off, a door opens in the centre of the structure which gives access to a hangar. Matching the rotation of your craft with that of the wheel allows you to enter the hangar, where points can be collected for destroying the Outsider ship that lurks therein. To escape from the hangar and proceed to the next section of the game the three controllers that operate the irising exit door have to be shot away — careful timing is needed here, as the door remains in the position it reaches at the instant when the third door controller is destroyed.

All the Outsider planets are protected by Defence Fields which consist of a number of gridded force barriers in space. Small openings in the force fields exist to allow Outsider craft to cross, but these entrances are obscured by spinning energy squares and are defended by missile systems. The more important the planet that you are attacking, the more Defence Fields you have to penetrate — and they get progressively harder . . .

After crossing a planet's Defence Fields your craft goes into orbit and enters battle with the Outsider fleet defending the planet. A handy head up scanner system tracks the enemy, using two windows. The right hand window displays the relative vertical position of an object or ship in the vicinity, while the left hand window gives a plan view of the surrounding chunk of space. When an enemy craft comes within laser range, the scanner windows automatically flip off and combat begins.

Some Outsider ships release a fuel pod when they are destroyed and the pods can be collected to boost fuel supplies. You have to be quick to get these since Outsider fuel scoops zoom in and try to whip them away. Once the orbital fighters have been vanquished, it's down to the planet and into the Ground Attack sequence, where a cross imposed over the planet's surface targets the laser system. Points are awarded for destroying alien artefacts.

CRITICISM

" Starstrike II **is a brilliant follow up to** Starstrike **and at £7.95 presents amazing value for money. Speed, as with all shoot em ups, is very important, and Realtime Software have not sacrificed speed at all in the cause of filled 3D graphics — I couldn't find any bit where the game slowed down because the screen was too full. Just because there's lots of amazing graphics doesn't mean that the game is small: it consists of lots of stages, and every stage is as good as the last. My personal favourite was the trench stage, which contains some superb filled-in graphics and looks better than the arcade Star Wars game!** Starstrike II **has loads of good features, like the 'on screen' scanners disappearing when you encounter the enemy. There's a host of different ships which are very detailed and neatly animated.** Starstrike II **is a game that every Spectrum owner should have on the shelf, and it represents fantastic value for money. "**

The Ventilation Duct is the next stage of the game, which is an upgraded version of the original trench sequence in *Starstrike*. Inside the duct the lasers are inoperative, and survival depends on your ability to dodge the trench constructions as collisions rapidly deplete shield energy. The usual left/right, up/down controls apply, with the fire button used in conjunction with up and down to accelerate and decelerate. Some careful driving is called for, as it's impossible to manoeuvre while changing speed. Mobile beams cross your path, spinning fans hinder you and irising doors have to be negotiated before the exit to the trench appears and the last phase of the attack on a planet begins.

The last stage varies for the different types of planet, but the general idea is similar. Depending on the type of planet, a reactor system, battle computer or agricultural control centre has to be knocked out as you fly along a computer controlled course. A successful strike opens a door at the far end of the course, and the game returns to the planet selection screen with one more planet deactivated.

The balance between fuel and shield levels is critical, and at the end of each stage in the attack on a planet fuel can be transferred to the shields. There's only one life in the game, and the mission ends if fuel or shields reach zero — and the galaxy will forever more be plagued by the Outsiders. Now that's not something you want to happen is it?

COMMENTS

Control keys: Q/A up/down, O/P left/right, B, N, M, SYM SHIFT, SPACE fire, X accelerate, Z decelerate, H head up displays on, J automatic head up displays, D dock
Joystick: Kempston, Interface 2, Cursor
Keyboard play: responsive as ever
Use of colour: monochromatic, mainly, with shading to create 3D effect
Graphics: fast and cool — guaranteed to stun anyone who sees them
Sound: neat
Skill levels: one
Screens: eight
General rating: A brilliant game

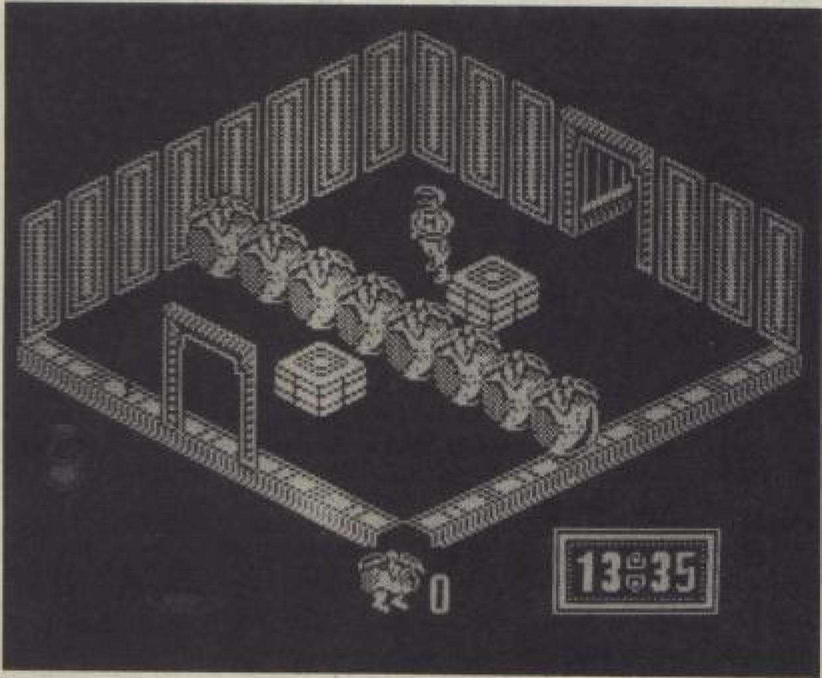
Use of computer	**94%**
Graphics	**97%**
Playability	**92%**
Getting started	**94%**
Addictive qualities	**94%**
Value for money	**96%**
Overall	**96%**

Reviews

ATTACK OF THE KILLER TOMATOES

Producer: Global
Retail price: **£7.95**
Author: **Fatman and Dobbin — graphics By S Ruecroft**

Yet another game of the film, but this time it's a game of a rather special film. *Attack of the Killer Tomatoes* may not have an Oscar, British Academy Award or Golden Lion to its name but what it does have is the prestigious 'World's Worst Vegetable Movie' accolade. For those of you to whom the plot is totally alien which probably encompasses most of you, it is as follows:

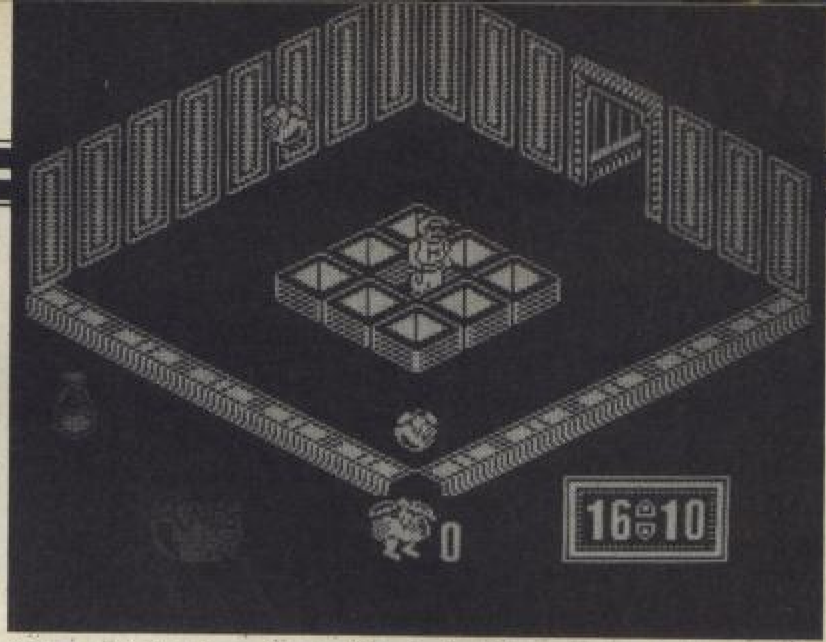


Wimp Plasbot, a man who despite not having the letter H appear anywhere in his name, but has it inscribed upon his sweater, is the hero and his place of employment is a Tomato Puree plant. This particular plant is oh—so—very—important indeed since it's the major supplier for the country's pizza parlours. Puree—less pizza is not a very palatable foodstuff at all and consequently if Killer Tomatoes had the sauce to attack this puree plant, people would be very upset and try to ketchup with the perpetrators. Well it just so happens that . . . .

Wimp must rid the plant of mutated vegetables and still keep the nation's pizzas pureed. Not an easy task, especially if your name is Wimp Plasbot. There are three different types of tomato to be found within the confines of the factory but only one of them is of the homeopathic persuasion. You can tell killer tomatoes a mile off — they have legs and move around in square-like patterns, they also kill. There eight of these little chappies and the object is to get rid of them.

Gleeful to see the arrival of their liberating killer cousins, the previously normal tomatoes now merrily bounce around their home. Wimp, no wimp when it comes to mashing vegetables, must get these animated red veggies into the crusher to keep up the supply of puree required. Though very happy indeed, the newly enlivened pre—pureed product is very easily scared. To curtail their bouncing activities Wimp must take advantage of their pathological fear of blood — Plasbot has to zap them with some tomato sauce. The third type of tomato is an inactive though still harmful sort of chap. These sit on on the factory floor and cause the time to whizz by. If 'knocking off' time is reached and the factory is not fully devoid of violent veggies then the game is over. Luckily though, Wimp can get some extra time by finding punch cards and depositing them into, strangely enough, a punch machine.

Presented in the *Knight Lore* 3D-ish type format that everyone with a Spectrum must have seen, *AKT* is an arcade adventure type game requiring the manipulation and use of various objects to disable the terrible toms. There are two separate caches supplied in which to hold objects. One is exclusively for storage of de—bounced tomatoes and the second is for any other objects. To pick anything up the numeric keys across the top of the keyboard are used, walking into the item that Wimp needs and holding a key, stores



that particular item in a little pigeon-hole and it's shown at the bottom of the screen along with a diminishing tomato which represents the puree supply. Any tomatoes squished boost the tomato back to its previously perky and fully blown self. If, however, it hits zero then half an hour is zapped off the clock and doom for the pizza eating population is half an hour nearer.

The factory is quite a large place and covers over four floors all accessible through holes between ceiling and floor. Wimp must clamber over objects with the use of his jump key and his amazing super power of walking in straight lines. Avoidance of nasties is wise as death could well result.

When death darkens this wimp's door, no real fuss is made but instead a dissection of puny Plasbot's progress is displayed, showing what percentage of various things he managed to complete. Though he may be Wimp by name and nature, Mr Plasbot is under your control. Don't let him wimp out — the nation's pizza eaters depend on you.

CRITICISM

● **"Yet another 3D monochrome game and I still don't get tired playing them. *Killer Tomatoes* is a take-off of the other 3D games — it's even programmed by Fatman and Dobbin! My favourite part of the game was squashing the tomatoes although I feel more could have been made of the squelching and killing. *Killer Tomatoes* contains a massive maze and, just like *Knight Lore* it takes a lot of time to get anything like a good score. I also found a few more similarities to the aforementioned game — starting in different locations, only being allowed to drop two items in each room and a few others. *Killer Tomatoes* is more of a fun game to play than *Knight Lore* but still requires lots of serious gamestering to get around obstacles, and with lots of good podgy tomatoes around, it's one of the jolliest 3D games around."**

● *"I was pleasantly surprisd when I loaded this one up, I thought it was going to be another of those mediocre games that has nothing other than its name going for it. I really enjoyed playing* Killer Tomatoes *as it has a special quality that will keep me playing for ages to come. Graphically it is very similar to* Sweevo's World, *very fast well drawn single colour isometric 3D, with large characters all jolly and nicely animated. On the sound front however it doesn't have much going for it, only the odd beep here and there and no tune, which is a shame as it would have added to its atmosphere a little. Generally I would recommend this game to everyone as it is compelling and playable."*

" Despite the awfulness of the movie of the same name, *AKT* is an excellent game, though it does owe quite a lot to previous releases. It's yet another 3D effort, though a very good effort it is. The graphics are speedy and pretty and give the effect of 3D which is held nicely throughout. As for the game, it's great and is quite funny as well. Wimp Plasbot is an wonderful hero who's easily persuaded to perform the actions required of him. There's a lot of challenge to keep the hardened gamesters at bay but it's easy enough for any simian to get into. Definitely worth a good look at."

COMMENTS

Control keys: Z rotate left, X rotate right, Q jump, A advance, 1—0 pick up
Joystick: Kempston, Interface II
Keyboard play: responsive as ever
Use of colour: two colour but detailed main screen with some bright spots on the status spots
Graphics: very neat and extremely fast. A believable 3D effect is competently created
Sound: No theme tune but adequate sound effects abound
Skill levels: 1
Screens: lots
General rating: a great game of a very bad movie.

Use of computer	86%
Graphics	88%
Playability	87%
Getting started	88%
Addictive qualities	90%
Value for money	90%
Overall	89%

SUPER COM

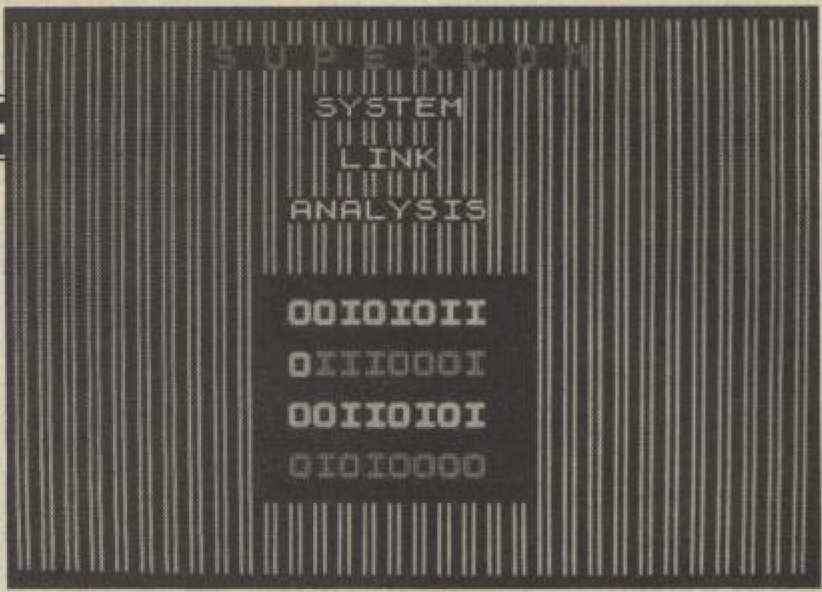
Producer: Atlantis
Retail price: **£1.99**

Oh dear, an insane criminal megalomaniac is holding the country to ran som with his super powerful computer-activated tactical nuclear warhead and the government can't track him down — trouble indeed. Who or what can stop him?? You mateyboots, that's who. Armed with your humble Spectrum and a *Supercom* modem you have taken it upon those sloping, narrow shoulders of yours to attempt to find and shut down the evil villain's computer through British Telecom's telephone cabling system.

As you might now have guessed *Supercom* is a hacking simulation, and starting with an incomplete phone number, which you have managed to intercept, you must work your way around the many computer security systems to track down, hack into and switch off the warhead's controlling computer. Your modem is quite a jolly little thing and has five modes of operation: *dial*, *link analysis*, *display information*, *load/save* and *'phone bill display*. Most of the functions are pretty obvious but *link analysis* and *display info* are special functions which, if used together, can extrapolate information from certain computer systems and have the information displayed on your screen. These functions are very useful if you are to find codes or information to allow you to break into other computer systems.

When the simulation commences you have only the telephone number 818-771 to go by. The last two digits are missing and it's up to you to find them out, either manually or by using the *link analysis* and *display* functions. Once that has been cracked and you link with the computer you find out the number is that of a certain Orion Photocopiers Ltd, a London based firm. Using the information from this harmless looking company you can glean the phone numbers of another three computers, although the passwords to each aren't fully given. It's then up to you to connect with and find out the passwords to each. No clues but all of the computers have something to do with one another so passwords from one can sometimes be found in another's system.

Once you get going a whole miniature world of computer systems opens up and there is plenty of information regarding certain systems and the background of other different companies to uncover. Once you really get going it gets increasingly more difficult to enter systems due to their artificial intelligence . . . **click** . . . *brrrrrrrrrrrrrrr*





CRITICISM

● " *Supercom* **is a very cheap version for budding hackers, it is different from** *Hacker* **by Activision in that it is just a case of thinking of numbers and won dering which ones will work — in a short it's very boring. At first look I found myself in a very normal company, but continued hacking made me realise that there is a massive plot to undermine everything that this country stands for, or something like that anyway. Even more hacking (into the BASIC) revealed that this game is just a case of jumping from one company to the next finding out telephone numbers. I'm afraid I found the game long and tedious, especially when you've got something like a hundred different numbers to choose from in some cases. I wouldn't recommend this to you, in fact you would get more value for money if you went out to your local computer stockist and spent a couple of hundred quid on the real equipment.** "

● *" This is a fine hacking game and one that is fun, challenging and very addictive. Initially it's tricky to get into, but I suppose hacking into other computer systems never is. Once you get going, though, it becomes very entertaining and it's easy to become totally involved with the game. There are no graphics but the game gives a convincing representation of the other computer systems in the network. The sound is quite good too with some quite realistic (if rather quiet) telephone noises. Unfortunately there are some niggling aspects of the game like being able to crash the program if BREAK is accidently pressed. There are also some awful spelling mistakes in the programs text — proffessional and* ambitiuos *are just two that I can recall. These niggles aside the program is still great fun and the fact that it costs only two quid makes it really worth buying if you want a change from beating up aliens or strolling around mysterious lands. "*

● " Off to a great start, I pressed one key (and it wasn't even the BREAK key) and it crashes, brilliant. After about half an hour of play I had had enough of this one there is just nothing to it. Generally sitting typing numbers into a computer and getting no response is not what I'd call fun, in fact I usually get payed for such a service. The graphics used in this game are minimal — a nice red border here and there but that's about it. The sound is poorly used, there are some good telephone type noises and the odd spot effect when a key is pressed. I wouldn't recommend this game to anyone as it is very monotonous.

COMMENTS

Control keys: numeric inputs
Joystick: none
Keyboard play: N/A
Use of colour: N/A
Graphics: N/A
Sound: some spot FX, otherwise limited
General rating: as you see — violently opposed views, briefly broken down a s; 'if you like the System 15000 type strategy/ hacking game, then it's very good value for money, and fun'. If you don't, then it's boring! The ratings below and therefore split, first for the pros, second for the cons . . .

Playability	87%
Getting started	78%
Addictive qualities	91%
Value for money	93%
Overall	86%

Playability	19%
Getting started	25%
Addictive qualities	13%
Value for money	21%
Overall	21%

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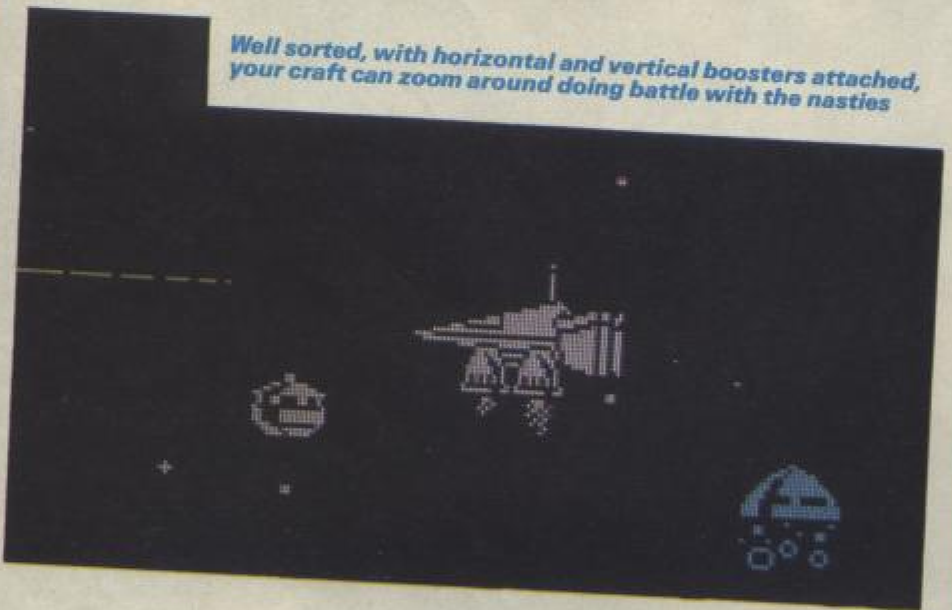
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The basic command module about to pick up a set of bolt-on boosters. Watch out for that helmeted alien and the little cloud



Well sorted, with horizontal and vertical boosters attached, your craft can zoom around doing battle with the nasties

Far away, deep in space, is the Zebarema, a closely knit cluster of worlds and stars. This is a very unusual planetary system, held in a powerful lattice of plasmic energy — a mega powerful magnetronic field. In short, it's not a place that people would really want to go to: it would take a



Producer: Ultimate
Retail price: **£9.95**
Author: **Ashby Computer Graphics**

About as close to space as any… is ever likely to get — unless you… that supercharge your craft



C·Y·B·E·R·U·N

ship of previously unheard of power to land and actually be able to pull free of the incredible pulse field that surrounds each of of the Zebarema worlds. No, this is not a nice place to go and no sane person would venture anywhere near the Zebarema, if it wasn't for Cybernite. The planets in the Zebarema are formed from Cybertron, an anti-element which crystallises to form Cybernite when it is exposed to positive matter space.

People will go to pretty amazing lengths to rule the galaxy and Cybernite is the elemental key to galactic domination. It is the hardest substance that exists, just the sort of thing that is most handy if starmining is your trade. Starmining is a pastime which confers the reward of ultimate power — get good at it, and the energy market becomes yours. Great minds worked hard and long on the Cybernite problem and a solution was set upon. A ship of truly awesome engine strength has been constructed in sections, which have been transported to the Zebarema system. This mega ship, capable of escaping from the Antiplasmic Lattice with a cargo of Cybertron, needs to be assembled. You have been chosen to pilot the command module of this craft to the Zebarema system, and must find the mega boosters, solar sails and other

COMMENTS

"After the last few Ultimate releases this is the last thing I expected. No Filmation I or II or anything like that — it's more like their old Lunar Jetman **style and could well be mistaken for a follow up to the classic shoot em up. Initially this shoot em up/ arcade adventure seems to be more of a regression than progression, but once you start playing the game it becomes increasingly clear that Ultimate have produced yet another excellent game. The playing area is huge and there are some excellent graphical effects like the stars which are beautifully parallaxed. It's nice seeing Ultimate produce something other than a Filmation game and a game which someone can wholeheartedly recommend."**

add-ons scattered around the area and create the ultimate spacecraft.

The task is not a simple one — you're not the only fellow after galactic domination and there's another ship of a similar design to yours scavenging the planet for ship parts. Alien beings are out to halt or at the very least hinder you. The worst thing about these aliens is the suicidal side of their nature: kamikaze body bashes into the ship's hull is their speciality. Luckily though, the ship in your command is made of a sterner stuff than the average alien, and they smear explosively, though not harmlessly, over your shield field. The shield takes a pounding, losing energy with each attack and if it gets to zero then 'BLAM'. At least you have four ships to play with.

Cyberun is a scrolling game, and the background whizzes behind your ship which sits centrally on the screen. The background is shown from a side on, cross sectional viewpoint and the playing area is huge. Flying skywards takes the ship into a zone with meteors and shooting stars, though the magnetronic field prevents all but the most fully equipped ship from going spaceside. Drifting back through the atmosphere, stratospheric cloud formations are encountered — some clouds are happy to rain harmfully on you while others are solid enough to provide a perch — then you're back at sea level where a complex cave system needs to be explored.

Left, right, thrust and fire enable an experienced pilot to perform proficiently. No down control is provided because gravity sees to that. The weapon system, when activated, sends a pulsing bolt of plasma into the inky black, dealing death to any bad guys that it spears through. A plasma ray can also be added to the inventory of equipment. Though the command module is a neat bit of kit, ship customisation is a must, as the basic craft is very slow. Two boosters are to

COMMENTS

"Ultimate's last release was, as usual, a brilliant game. Now finally, after two years, have released a shoot em up. Cyberun **is effectively the follow on to** Lunar Jetman. **The graphics are very good and playability wise** Cyberun **is an excellent game. Going around shooting the assorted nasties is fun. The idea of gradually equipping your ship is a very good one — the inlay card doesn't give much away, so it is a challenge just to find out what all the various goodies are for. Shoot em ups are always fun and** Cyberun **is no exception. The overtones of arcade adventure make it just as addictive. This is a classic shoot em up which I'm sure all fans of** Lunar Jetman **will enjoy."**

be found near to the start point of your mission: a horizontal one and a vertical one. Fly through them and they become part of the ship automatically, handily enhancing your capabilities.

Enhanced though you may be, death is still a readily available commodity within the Zebarema worlds. A small graphic representation of your craft appears on the top of the screen and its colour changes every time damage is received. Fuel is limited, and the level in your tanks is indicated by thermometer type gauge running down the right hand side of the screen. Extra fuel can picked up from fuel stations around the planetary surface which spout droplets of this precious commodity. Fly through a droplet of fuel and the gauge gets well excited, repeaking to the 'full' mark. And death is worth avoiding, especially when the prize is total power. Are you megalomaniac enough to take the strain?

COMMENTS

"So, Ultimate are back in the shoot em up stakes again. I'm sure fans of the earlier games will be pleased; I know I am! The graphics are very good, and move as they should do, smoothly and evenly. Pity about the colour clashes, but I suppose they couldn't avoid them. The game itself is very good fun, and I found it quite challenging, though the sort of people who complete an Ultimate game every ten minutes will disagree. Value for money is pushed up with the inclusion of a head cleaner and generally, I think Ultimate have got their act back together again: hooray!"

CRITICISM

Control keys: Z, C, B, M left, X, V, N, SYM SHIFT right, second row of keys for up, third row fire lasers, number keys for plasma ray
Joystick: Kempston, Interface 2, Cursor
Keyboard play: may seem sluggish, but just right
Use of colour: quite pretty
Graphics: very good, neat scrolling
Sound: jingles and spot effects
Skill levels: one
Screens: huge scrolling playing area
General rating: A good arcade adventure shoot em up!

Use of computer	88%
Graphics	91%
Playability	91%
Getting started	82%
Addictive qualities	92%
Value for money	89%
Overall	**90%**

...in the Zebarema system ...find the rest of the parts





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REVENGE OF THE C5

Producer: Atlantis
Retail price: **£1.99**

A certain bespectacled, balding, small person by the name of Clive is out to prove how reliable his electric car is after receiving more than a fair amount of bashing by nasty media people. To prove what a reliable and Milton Keynes form of transport his plastic pram is, he's entered it for the arduous and raucous annual cross country competition. Not wanting to be made to look silly and seeing a chance for yet another dig at the C5, the press have laid in wait several anti-C5 devices that should make the C5 driver's journey more than a little hairy. The country to be crossed is not what you would call 'nice' at all — it's mostly roads but the obstructions within the roads are the things to be avoided. Electrically motorised connection with anything that's not particularly road-like results in a mixture of entrails and C5 plastic spread all over the street.

There are 41 different sections to the course traversed by moving up the screen and being flicked into the next. Displayed from a very tall person's point of view, everything is seen from above. As in real life the controls for the C5 are far from comprehensive. Left and right comes in three different varieties: slow, medium and fast. Four keys are used, two for each direction, one is slow the other medium speed while both held in unison brings in a burst of mega turbo speed. Another key is supplied which adds pedal power to the weak battery, giving a bit of a boost.

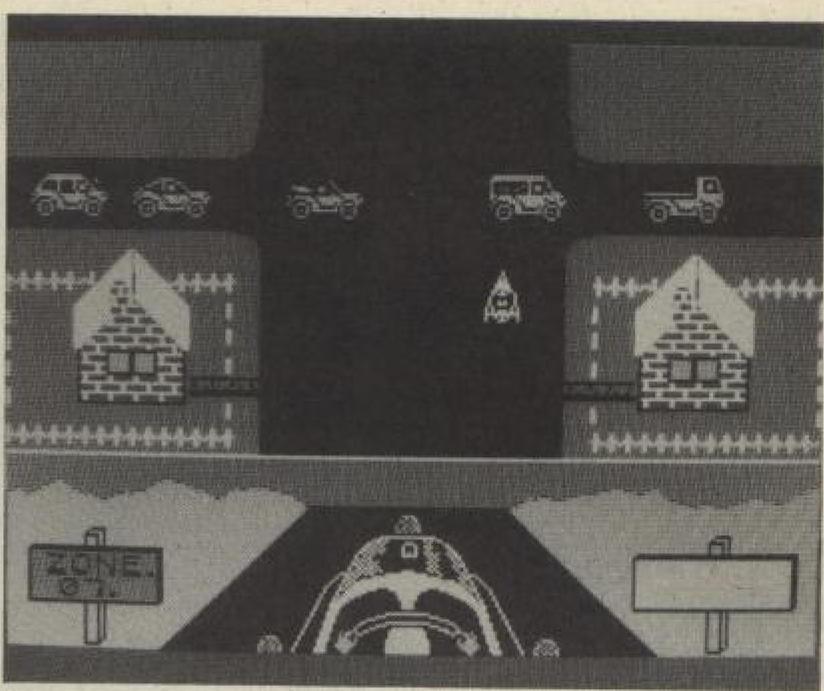
The nasties planted by the press wander along predetermined paths on each screen and more often than not there's only one of them. On some screens a line of traffic presents a bit of a problem and careful speed control is needed to get past such sheets. Every tenth section a handy bonus screen is presented with the promise of lots of extra points dependent on your skill. The first, for instance, asks for the C5 to be parked in a trickily small garage.

Even though there are no other contestants in sight, it is a race and if all 41 screens are completed then a comment and placing is delivered to you and you can judge your own progress. Otherwise no rating is given and the next day the whole of the media will be poking fun at Clive's plastic wonder and you wouldn't want that would you?.

CRITICISM

● "Though the scenario is quite fun it's a shame the game doesn't really live up to it. It really is a horror from our computing past. *Revenge of the C5* is one of the most tediously simple things that's been thrown my way for a long time. Their are no outstanding features to be found however hard you may look. What's more it's awkward, for some strange reason the A key is of some important significance to the game and repeated presses of it are required to move between various option and title screens. Compared to other budget releases *Revenge of the C5* does look rather silly. Miss it at your fortune. "

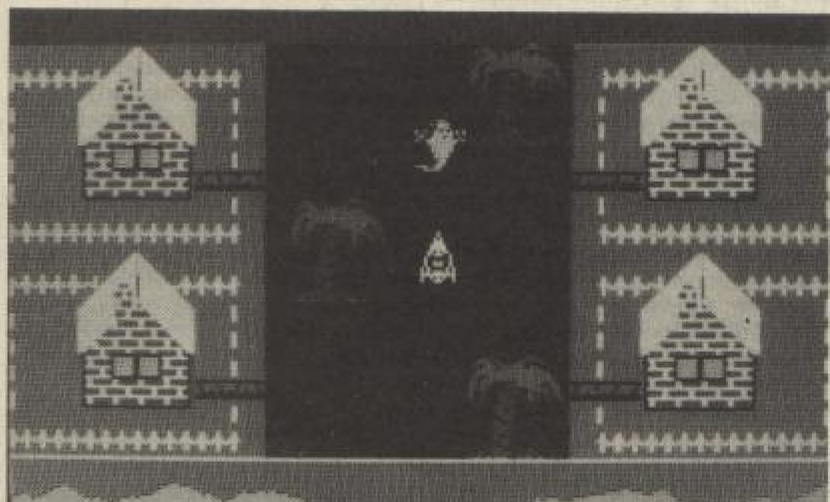
● *" I couldn't help laughing on reading the inlay — 'evil newspaper reporters' after the C5. This is a game which was written for a budget buy and the scenario and game suit the price. Going on looks, it looks like 'one of the first Spectrum games' (as an enquiring head muttered over my shoulder — it was Roger Kean, he should know). The game has flickery graphics and of course attribute problems, which could easily have been avoided.* Revenge of the C5 *has that certain amount of simple addictivity which occurred in games such as* Roller Coaster *and* Jetpac, *but I'm afraid it lacks in sound, graphics and presentation, all of which are of a very simple nature. It's very poor on all aspects*



but will require a lot of patience, memory and skill to complete it. You could be hooked after your first game but I shouldn't think you'd load it again. "

● " This is not the best Atlantis game I have seen but it certainly isn't the worst. The idea behind it is quite fun although it isn't very original, win a race and dodge all the nasties. The graphics seem to suffer from inbuilt flicker which is pretty hard on the eyes after a while. The characters are undetailed and they move around the place abysmally but there are lots of them — the playing area is about the best feature of the graphics with bushes, houses, trees and the like by the side of the road or littering your path, which are all nicely drawn. The sound is pretty awful and there are no effects during the game itself other than the horrid sound when you crash your buggy, this horrid sound repeats itself on the title screen whenever you press a key. After forcing myself to play this one until I got a decentish score I discovered to my amazement that I was quite enjoying it. Quite a jolly game this one but I can't really see myself playing it for long. "



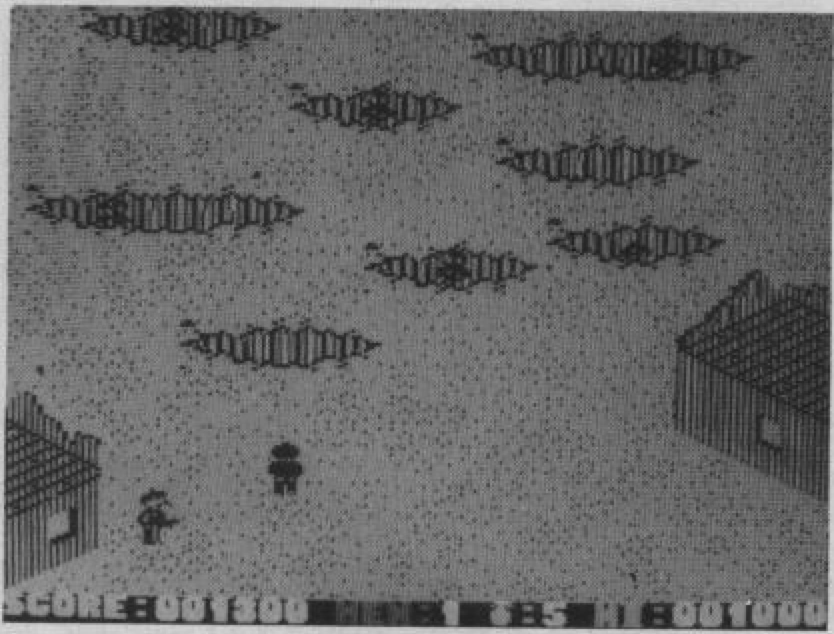


COMMENTS

Control keys: 1/0 slow left/right; 2/9 fast left/right; in combination for very fast left/right, Space to peddle
Joystick: none
Keyboard play: awkward with fairly slow responses
Use of colour: average
Graphics: primitive, although some nicely detailed sprites
Sound: poor
Screens: 41
General rating: a very dated looking and feeling game with some addictive merits for its low price.

Use of computer	41%
Graphics	34%
Playability	48%
Getting started	45%
Addictive qualities	38%
Value for money	42%
Overall	42%

WHO DARES WINS II



Producer: Alligata
Retail price: **£8.95**
Author: **Steve Evans**

It's hero's hour again and time to take a stroll behind enemy lines and destroy an entire army single handedly. *Who Dares Wins II* puts you in the popular position of a sole commando plonked deep within enemy territory. Armed with a few grenades and your favourite machine gun you must delve even deeper and capture eight outposts while fighting off massive opposition in this, veteran arcade ace programmer Steve Evans' first excursion onto the Spectrum from the Commodore.

The action takes place over a flick screen landscape where you progress upwards — reaching the top of a screen flicks you to the bottom of the next screen and so on. The object of the game is to reach and destroy the outposts found at the end of a series of landscapes.

When the game commences your Commando nonchalantly stands at the bottom of the screen. Bombed-out buildings lie either side of him and the only choice is to go forward across the barren scenery. Within a few seconds of moving forward the enemy soldiers become alerted to your presence and rush out from the sides of the screen, jumping off buildings, running from behind trees, firing their guns and lobbing grenades all over the place. Luckily they're not too advanced on the technological scene and only carry single shot rifles while you, on the other hand, have your trusty sub machine gun capable of pumping bullets out at quite a considerable rate. Mind you, you need the rapid fire since the numbers of enemy is sometimes overwhelming.

The enemy landscape is full of hazards just awaiting an overzealous soldier and sometimes these traps lie right near the bottom of a screen so when the game flicks it's easy to go blundering into them. Some of the horrible dangers include quicksand, pools of water with crumbling banks (our hero can't swim!) and rivers. There are other more mechanical hazards too: soldiers with accurate mortar bombs, trains which trundle along railway lines that have occasionally to be crossed, jeeps, lorries, missile firing tanks (very deadly), bomb dropping aeroplanes and fighters which fly straight down the screen and strafe the ground (and any people on it) with machine gun fire. All ground vehicles and mortar bombers can be disposed of with a well aimed hand grenade. You start the game with three grenades and extra ones are parachuted in for you to pick up later on.

Occasionally you stumble across one of your allies, although he's in a lot more trouble than you are. You see, he's tied to a tree and if you don't set him free he ceases to be because he's about to get shot by a soldier. If you shoot his would-be executioner then you'll earn yourself extra points and the rescued person's gratitude.

Nearer to the outpost rivers are encountered with little thin bridges being the only way across. Soldiers on the other side wait for you to move onto the bridge so that they can pick you off with ease, so shoot before you cross. There are sometimes little patrol boats on the river, but these don't pose a threat to the soldier and can be easily destroyed with a grenade. When the outpost is finally reached many soldiers pour forth and a pitched battle, with you in the middle, ensues. Here the game becomes immensely hectic and it's up to your reflexes and digit dexterity to ensure survival. If you manage to gun down all the soldiers then the outpost is declared yours and you automatically go forth to try to retake the next outpost.

On later outposts the going gets far tougher with soldiers in potholes and a far more hazardous landscape to claim all of your five lives. If five lives seems a little meagre then don't fret too much — extra lives can be earned at regular point intervals.

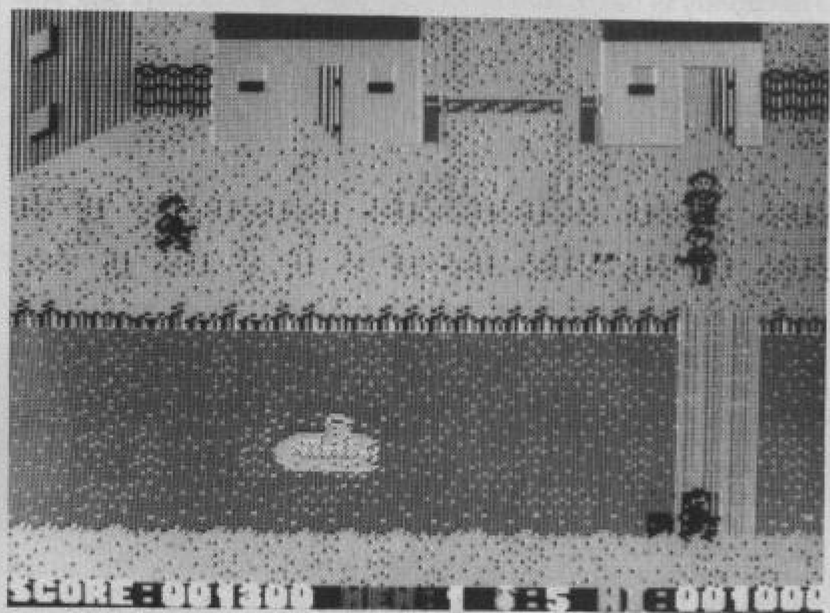
CRITICISM

● **" Alligata who first brought out the 'Commando' style game on any type of micro are a bit late with their Spectrum version and by the look of it they haven't spent much time on it either. *Who Dares Wins II* suffers from a distinct case of colour clashing which I thought had gone from the Spectrum altogether. The graphics are very small, with stick-like soldiers apparently suffering from a bad case of vitamin C deficiency. The sound is the sort that makes your table vibrate under you and gives the earplugs a good airing. Playability is quite good due to the idea of rescuing men but the flipping screens holds you up in your tracks. This may appeal to the 'shoot em up what ever they are freaks' but I'm afraid it is not up to the *Rambo*s or *Commando*s of the Spectrum scene. "**

● *" A good shoot em up, I think. Colour has been used well, and the backdrops are quite good, even if the men are too small. Playability-wise, it's very good indeed, and it's also highly addictive, though I did have to make an effort to start again after knocking out several outposts and getting some way into the game. There's lots of fun to be had blasting all the little enemies, and I enjoyed it; I think most shoot em up freaks will too. "*



● " There are so many *Commando* type games available on the Spectrum nowadays they've really got to be something special to justify buying. This, unfortunately, isn't really of a high enough standard and pales besides Elite's *Commando* and Imagine's *Green Beret*. The graphics are flickery and the landscape rather bland, and there are other niggles too, like being able to stroll through trees and other landscape features. The game is still fun to play, though, but isn't really worth buying if you've already got a 'Commando' game. "



COMMENTS

Control keys: redefinable
Joystick: Interface 2, Kempston
Keyboard play: responsive and straightforward
Use of colour: a bit thin and suffers colour clashes
Graphics: lively enough but disappointingly stick-like characters
Sound: reasonable
Skill levels: progressive
General rating: a rather disappointing version, still a reasonably enjoyable and tough shoot em up though.

Use of computer	**71%**
Graphics	**72%**
Playability	**81%**
Getting started	**77%**
Addictive qualities	**74%**
Value for money	**77%**
Overall	**73%**

BACK TO THE FUTURE

Producer: Electric Dreams
Retail price: **£9.99**
Author: **Martin Walker**

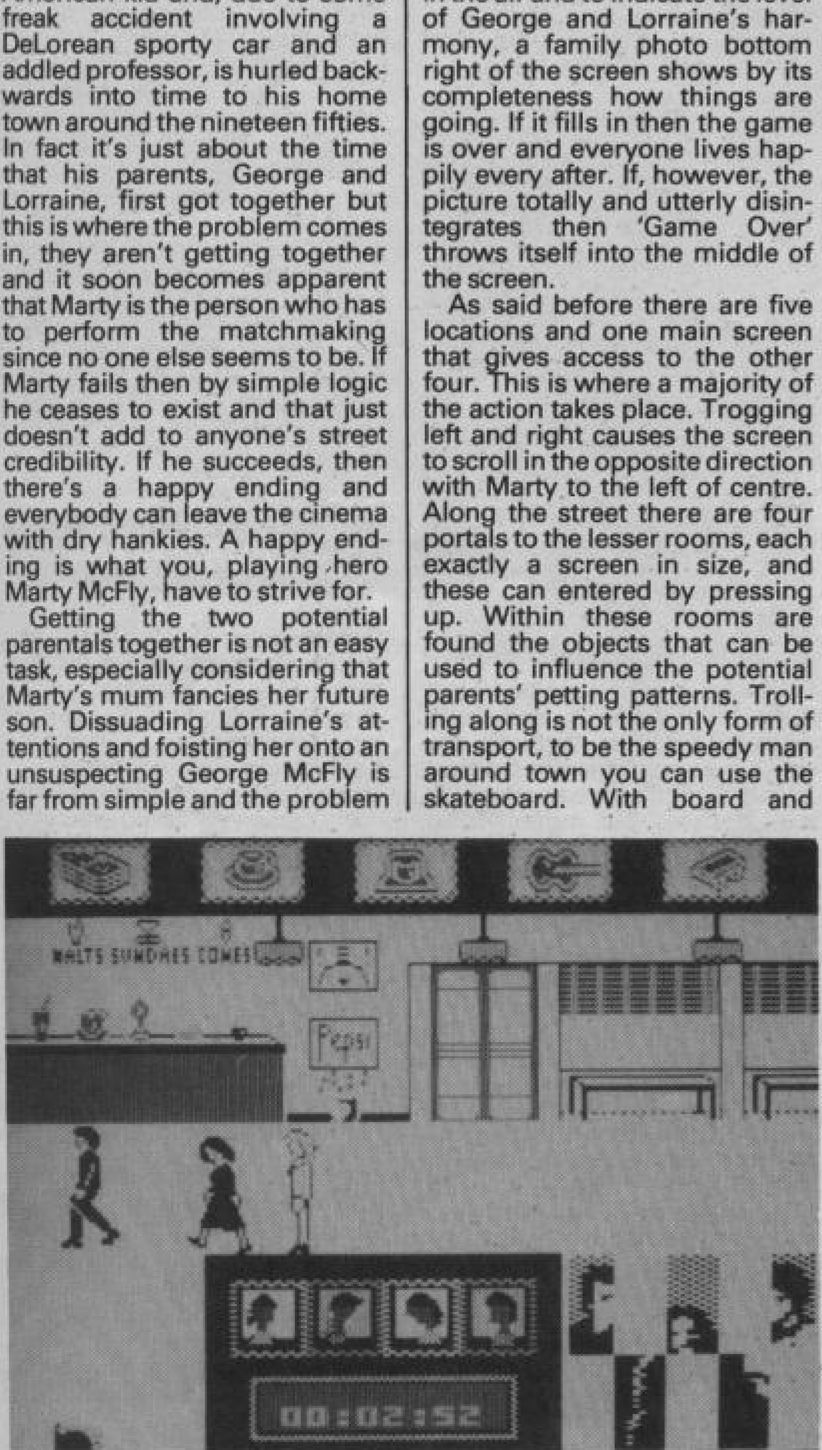
For every smash hit film there's usually a computer game to match and *Back to the Future* is no exception to this economically sound rule. From the bonny bay of Southampton, land of *Electric Dreams* comes what was predictable, *Back to the Future* — the computer game! For those people who've lived within a cardboard box in Kirkcaldy for the last year and don't know the plot it is as follows:

Marty McFly is the archetypal god—fearing, bomb—loving American kid and, due to some freak accident involving a DeLorean sporty car and an addled professor, is hurled backwards into time to his home town around the nineteen fifties. In fact it's just about the time that his parents, George and Lorraine, first got together but this is where the problem comes in, they aren't getting together and it soon becomes apparent that Marty is the person who has to perform the matchmaking since no one else seems to be. If Marty fails then by simple logic he ceases to exist and that just doesn't add to anyone's street credibility. If he succeeds, then there's a happy ending and everybody can leave the cinema with dry hankies. A happy ending is what you, playing hero Marty McFly, have to strive for.

Getting the two potential parentals together is not an easy task, especially considering that Marty's mum fancies her future son. Dissuading Lorraine's attentions and foisting her onto an unsuspecting George McFly is far from simple and the problem manifests itself as an arcade adventure using a type of mini—icon system for interaction with people and objects. There are five different objects to be found in the five different locations. These can be used on the five different characters that wander aimlessly within the binary backstreets. Five is obviously a significant number for the designer. Objects can be picked up, dropped and used. Objects are used on characters and result in one of three responses: run away from Marty, follow Marty or completely ignore Marty. Being completely ignored is the game's way of telling you you've done something stupid. The idea is to force George and Lorraine to spend as much time together as is possible. If they do then love will most certainly be in the air and to indicate the level of George and Lorraine's harmony, a family photo bottom right of the screen shows by its completeness how things are going. If it fills in then the game is over and everyone lives happily every after. If, however, the picture totally and utterly disintegrates then 'Game Over' throws itself into the middle of the screen.

As said before there are five locations and one main screen that gives access to the other four. This is where a majority of the action takes place. Trogging left and right causes the screen to scroll in the opposite direction with Marty to the left of centre. Along the street there are four portals to the lesser rooms, each exactly a screen in size, and these can entered by pressing up. Within these rooms are found the objects that can be used to influence the potential parents' petting patterns. Trolling along is not the only form of transport, to be the speedy man around town you can use the skateboard. With board and wheels beneath your feet you can really whizz, avoiding any trouble from Biff.

Biff is the school bully and is so called because he Biffs people. Get biffed and precious time wastes away while breath is caught. Biff can be rebiffed though since punching is something that is handily supplied to your repertoire of commands. Biff the bully and he won't be in the mood to hit anybody for a good minute or so.

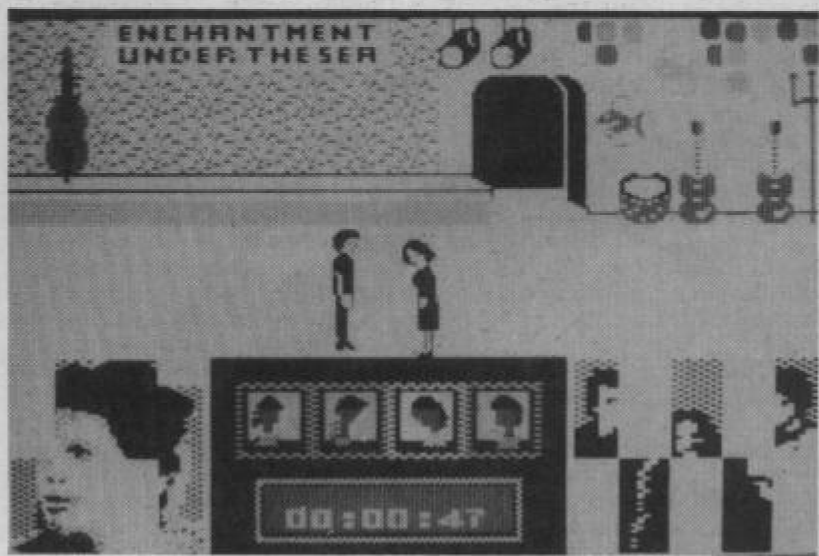


CRITICISM

● "*Back to the Future* **is a very good game IF you've seen the movie but I'm afraid it wouldn't appeal to you much if you haven't. I've noticed recently that a lot of the latest film tie-ins have actually had a lot to do with the films themselves — which makes a difference from the previous batch. I found the game hard to get used to, and a thorough read of the instructions is essential, but once I mastered it I felt a great sense of relief as I saw my family picture piece together. Each of the characters in the game has their own sort of personality, and I had great fun shouting at George to buck his ideas up and marry the woman who chased me round the whole neighbourhood (Hallo mum)! The playing area is small and can be explored pretty quickly once you've got the skateboard — a bit of a disappointment, although the gameplay is very good and makes up for the not so special scrolling.**

● *"Yet another 'game of the film' this, and as usual it's pretty bad. From the word go I was annoyed, it isn't compelling or playable in the slightest. Controlling your character is a little weird as to execute certain moves you have to press the fire button (Fist style). The graphics leave a lot to be desired, the playing area scrolls left and right character by character — to avoid attribute problems I presume. This makes the backdrops look very jerky, the characters look unreal (limbs in the wrong places etc) and they also resemble each other so much that the first few goes it's hard to distinguish between them. I wouldn't really recommend this game as it is of a very poor standard but I feel that many people will still buy it on the strength of the film."*

● "As is usual with a smash hit film that's been used as an idea and converted into a game that's really awful, it will sell and sell. Nothing really new there. *Back to the Future* follows the same format as many other liscensing deals; it has awful graphics and practically no gameplay at all. It's very hard to believe that people have been credited for graphics and game design on the loading screen, nobody could be proud of such work."

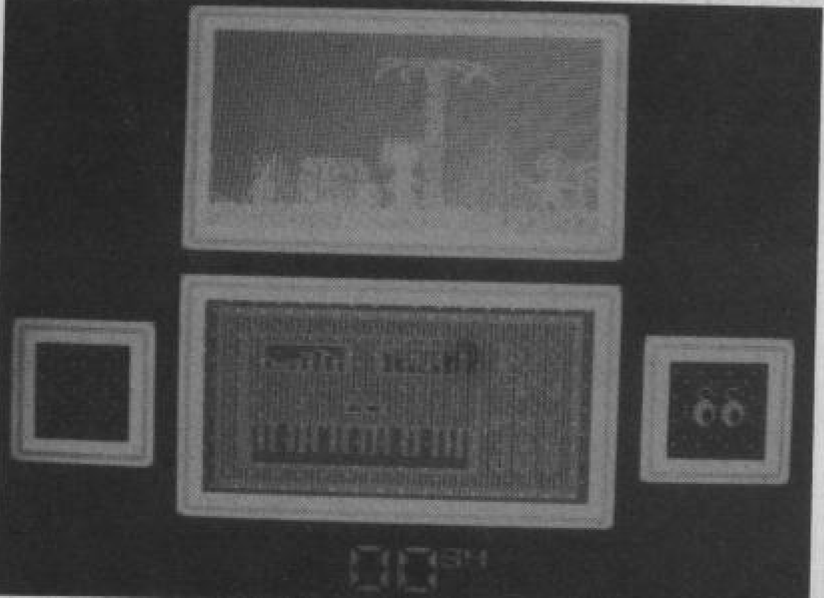


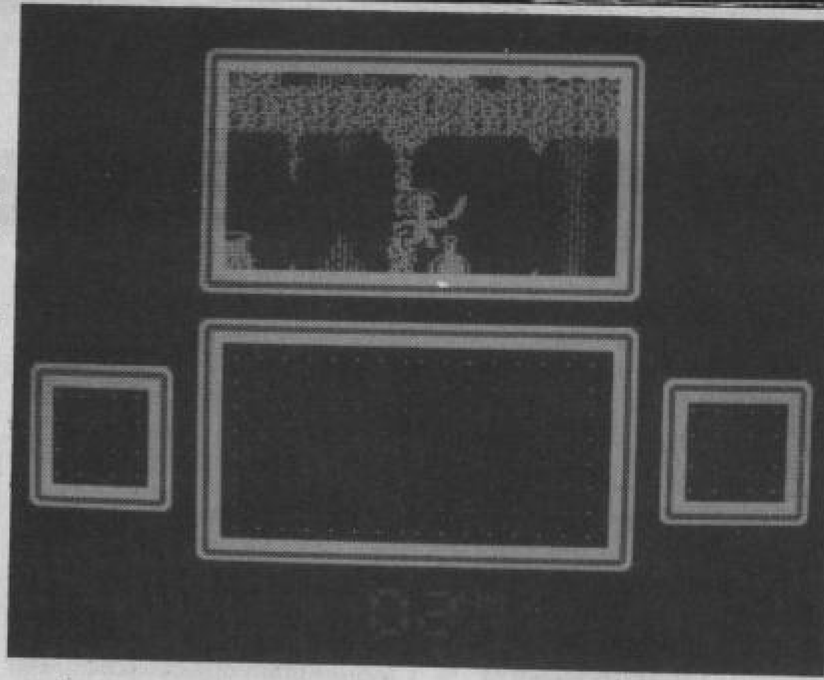
COMMENTS

Control keys: cursors and Space to 'fire'
Joystick: Kempston
Keyboard play: simple enough
Use of colour: hardly pretty, garish is a better word
Graphics: awfully animated characters plus nastily jerking background scroll
Sound: very neat title tune but apart from that there's near to nothing.
Skill levels: 51
Screens: 5
General rating: a very expensive disappointment, and annoying to see Commodore screens used so largely on the packaging.

Use of computer	54%
Graphics	49%
Playability	43%
Getting started	47%
Addictive qualities	42%
Value for money	36%
Overall	**42%**

HOCUS FOCUS





Producer: Quicksilva
Retail price: **£8.95**
Author: **Dave Whittaker and Steve Hughes**

After commiting some horribly sordid and particularly nasty crime arch professor eccentric, Dr Augustus Dopper, has been taken into the police custody and is in severe danger of having to eat large amounts of porridge. Left within his Hyde Park residence are a number of yet to be submitted patent applications. Though the dear old Prof was far more than the odd marble short, stupid he wasn't and the various potential patents are of a very interesting nature indeed. The *Daily Shocker* is one of the organisations that the new inventions have managed to interest. Why? Because their readers have a right to know? Because some rather mind-stimulating and in-depth articles could be written about them? No, the *Daily Shocker* isn't that sort of paper. It's because the headline 'SICKO BOFFINS STARTLING INVEN TIONS' would sell plenty of copies to the type of reader that the rag attracts.

Hacker Harry, editor in chief, soon assigns the best man on the staff to the job of getting into the Prof's labs to photograph the *pat. pending* papers left around the place. His name is Jeremy, he is a punk and is a YOP trainee photographer.

Old Augustus Dopper had a very strange mind indeed and for some peculiarly unexplained reason the professor's workplace is decorated with a number of palm trees and a hole in the ground. Since the palm trees are a bit dull Jeremy decides to jump through the hole and into the multi-layered caverns that make up Augustus's secret lair. Within this subterranean psycho bin there are some very strange objects to be found and not all of them are as benign as they may well seem. The major concern of Jeremy's travels is to seek out the number of pots that proliferate in the caves, for within these lie one of three items: a vaccuum, a nasty or a patent. The first causes no trouble, just disappointment. The second is surprising and steals any objects in Jeremy's inventory. The third should be photographed instantly and recorded for posterity.

Once the film is full it has to be developed, an activity which is carried out at the place where Jeremy came into the scene. It's also worth resurfacing for the fresh air as it blows away any form of radiation that may have infected Jeremy. Because of the strange nature of Dr Dopper's experiments there's more background radiation about than there is on Cumberland's beaches and popping back to the outside world drains off the millirads at a reassuring rate. Another thing to be wary of are the baddies ready to spring into Jeremy's path if he trundles over a Jeremy sensitive pad, plodding after him, they trounce the punk person and steal all of his loot.

Hocus Focus is a game that takes place within 'windows'. There are four in all and the main window should keep your eye for most of the time. It contains a centrally placed Jeremy sprite with his background around him. As Jeremy moves with his left, right and jump keys the pretty scenery scrolls smoothly by.

To interact with his environment far more than the normal directional controls are supplied, two of the other windows relate to the implementation of the icon system. *Hocus Focus* is also an adventure type game and a quick pound on the icon key freezes all action and activates two little windows. Up and down cycles through the various actions available while fire selects that command. This section is needed quite a bit for peering in vases, taking photos and developing film type activities. As in all good adventures, objects can be picked up and manipulated, in fact they have to be to finish the game.

All is over once the complete set of patents have been celluloidally captured by the punk cub reporter.

CRITICISM

● "*Hocus Focus* **is a very well presented and neat little game, although I feel it suffers from the same problem as** *FGTH* **in that you need a good few hours to play through the whole game.**



Despite this awesome task I got quite involved in it, and quite enjoyed trudging through the deep recesses of some tropical island. The play area scenery is well detailed but suffers from being cramped up in a small little box at the top of the screen — after a while I felt the strain on my eyes as this little box is where 95% of the action takes place. *Hocus Focus* **was easy to get into but presented no further challenge in keeping the game going — all that is needed is lots of time and patience, as the baddies (that incidently look like martians from outer space) become very annoying after a few minutes or so. I enjoyed playing** *Hocus Focus* **the first time but wouldn't bother to go back to it again.**

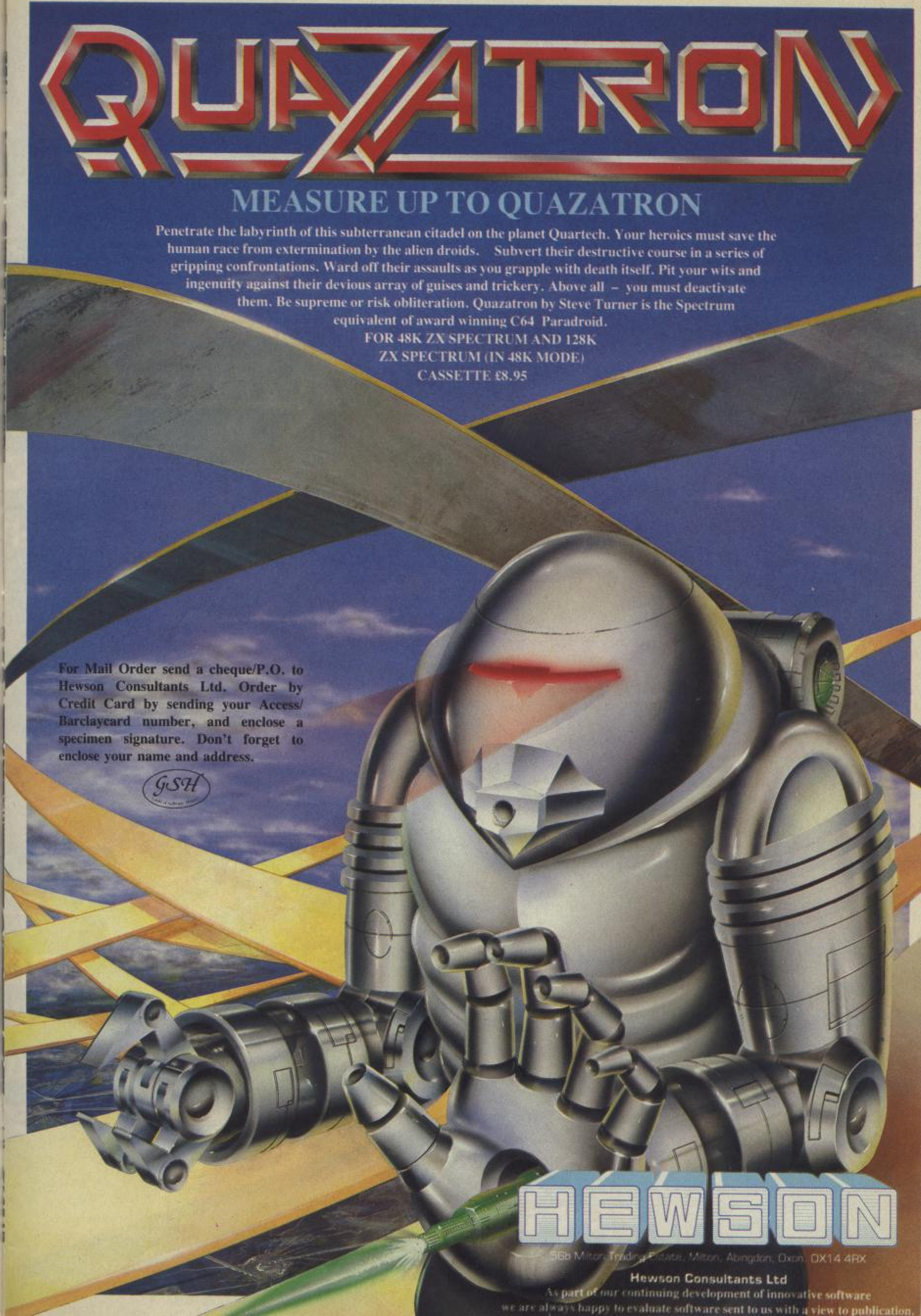
● *"A strange little release this and rather pleasant it is too. As an interpretation of an adventure without text it works very well indeed. The icon system is one of the easiest to use that I've yet seen, change between arcade action and ponderous decision is very easy indeed. The graphics, though monochromatic, work quite well, the animation is especially nice. The scrolling is noticeable by its quality, very smooth and fluent indeed. Overall a neat little release that would be well worth a look at from any person into this type of thing.*

● "This is a straightforward game in terms of gameplay — patience and a good mapping arm are all that's needed to complete it successfully. It's a well finished, tidily produced product with excellent scrolling icon control that is fun to play — for a while at least. At times the game can be very frustrating, particularly when a meanie pops out and steals your film which is full of useful snaps, but if you make a mistake it's not fatal! The animation is quite neat — I particularly liked the punk hairstyle of your hero cub reporter — but the actual playing area is, perhaps a little small. All in, not a bad game, but not a great game."

COMMENTS

Control keys: O/P left/right, M to jump/activate icon, A for icon mode, Q & A to scroll icons
Joystick: Kempston, Cursor type, Interface 2
Keyboard play: responsive
Use of colour: monochromatic main screen with colourfully pretty windows.
Graphics: nice animation though the backgrounds are a bit bland
Sound: not amazing and barely audible
Skill levels: 1
Screens: multi-level playing area
General rating: quite a neat game that is actually original in some aspects.

Use of computer	78%
Graphics	77%
Playability	71%
Getting started	81%
Addictive qualities	71%
Value for money	68%
Overall	70%


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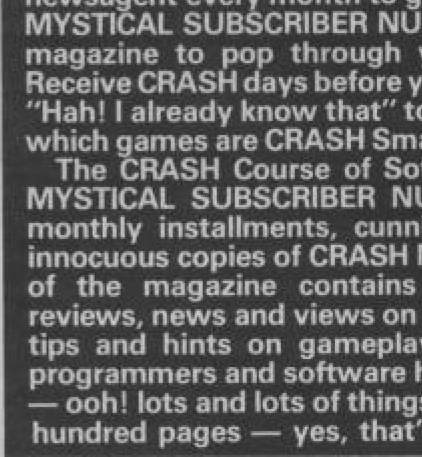
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At least the sun's been shining in through the grimy CRASH Towers windows this week, making it feel as though summer might actually be on the way. The sun seems to have brought a rather interesting bag of letters this month as well. Top topic is definitely the Spectrum 128, with some mixed opinions about Uncle Clive's latest venture. There are still some comments arriving about the redesigned CRASH, with some relevant ideas about the review ratings, and a few follow up points about things like CRASH covers and home copying. I found myself torn between two good letters, and ended up awarding the first Letter of the Month status, and the second, Runner-Up of the Month status! On with the Forum!

PUERILE TRIPE

Dear Lloyd,
I thought I'd write to you just so that I could at least try to clear up the mess left by puerile tripe writers (try saying that after six pints of Flatulence!) complaining about this and that, shouting about anti-piracy devices saying that they won't buy this or that anymore and people complaining about the look, feel, colour, price, height and width of your magazine (the nerve!). Now, on with the agenda.

Item No. 1 - The Forum (Quiet in the 3 an' 9's!). This is a much stretched point, the fact of whether to include or throw away the Bugbox in favour of Oli's bugs. Personally, I think they make the whole Forum stand out. I, for one would not want to wade through eight pages of solid writing. Another point, hasn't Oli got enough to do? I mean, every page nearly has a picture drawn by him on it! Poor fella!

Item No. 2 - Listings. I was astonished to see a couple of letters not so long ago asking for listings in the magazine. NEVER! DON'T GIVE IN! It's the one thing that makes CRASH different. You are the epitome of good reviews, humour and wit. Listings would only take up space and I never bother to type them in anyway!

Item No. 3 - Decline and fall of CRASH? Who says? I totally disagree with Iain Pardoe of Frimley, to get rid of the aforementioned bugs would mean a lowering of correspondence and humour. If maturity is humourlessness, argumentativeness and the ability to gripe and moan all the time then we all should stay immature. If you look back into the not too distant past you will notice no hints and tips, what's more, the Forum has grown (definitely a plus!) and we get more for the price, sadly though, to the detriment of the centre pages. (Why do they always come out?)

Item No. 4 - Piracy. Schoolyard piracy is neither here nor there, although I am not condoning it. Why on earth should big conglomerates like Ocean bother with kids, I mean, if they are successful in convicting one then the parents get the fine, you're still not getting at the kid, are you? However, it is up to us to stop piracy and buy the games. I am not rich and the last game I bought was *Swords and Sorcery* at Christmas. Buy the games you really want, that way you get what you want, the companies don't lose sales and slowly but surely the prices will come down. Or, do what I do, get a group of friends and before you know it, you've all got a decent selection of games. I'll lend my games to anyone I like thank you to all those who prohibit such use of software. If we are forced to stop lending games then everyone loses interest, piracy goes skyhigh and companies go bust, such is the way of human nature.

Item No. 5 - Sign Stumps and other Brewster items. This, you will be glad to know, is the last item. One point, can't you make it a bit clearer? I mean, I have to search through Sign Stumps to find any relevant information because the game titles are hidden away in the text. Why not make them into headings, listing request and clues beneath them? Apart from that, his column is superb, keep it up. Great, I'm glad I got that off my chest! Oh, and by the way, I saved you a job by typing CRASH in capital letters to start off with.
Stephen Horn, Hornsea, Hull

Thanks for your support, Stephen. No, there'll be no listings in CRASH (apart from essential Candy Pokes). As to Sign Stumps — over to you Derek — a few headings perhaps — or perhaps I should address that to Graeme (Wot Edits) Kidd? Anyway, Stephen, your software choice should be on its way soon.
LM

LAST ONE FROM A LADY

Dear Lloyd
I am fed up with the constant stream of letters complaining about blood, gore, sexual overtones etc. letters from 'concerned' parents and other relatives that are flowing in with stupid statements like: 'The advertisement for *The Legend of the Amazon Women* is totally unsuitable for my 63 year old son. Or 'I will never buy CRASH again, as long as it continues to print advertisements similar to *Bomjack*. My son's order has been cancelled. At 26 he should not be subjected to illustrations showing bombs . . .'

The sort of things these 'helpful' do-gooders find offending amazes me. If you were to take out all the adverts likely to offend these Mary Whitehouse types, then sadly you would have lost around 20 sides of paper. These are the sort of things they find offending: The advert for *Desert Rats* on page 123 (March Issue) Not only does it show men at war, but those men are gasp! in shorts and eeek!!! they, they, I can't bring myself to say this but their socks are . . . wrinkled. But if they find that bad what did they think of the ad. on page 55? With such a horrific title as 'The Complete Crashman' how was it ever allowed to be printed. No doubt CRASH will receive dozens of letters with things such as: 'The advert on page 55 of the March Issue should never have been printed. Showing two people leaning on a climbing frame of some description, will greatly encourage vandalism in the under 3s.'

'The advert is downright disgraceful. I removed page 55 of my March Issue. Imagine printing such an advert, with scribbles on it. So many people will now see it, and may be tempted to — to — to scribble on magazines. I am disgusted to say the least . . . etc.'

All I can say is it's sad to think that people send in letters like this in all seriousness. Fair enough, all adverts do not suit everyone's taste or age group, eg an advert for an over 18 should not be shown to a 3 year old. But how many 3 year olds are there who can read? These adverts should be taken light-heartedly. If you do not like the advert, then don't buy the game. Don't waste Forum's space by filling it up with stupid letters about adverts you don't like.

I read CRASH from start to ▶



finish NB unaccompanied by my parents. I did not feel the urge to lean on a climbing frame, scribble on someone or build a bomb. I am not a mindless idiot, I have a mind of my own and I certainly won't be influenced by adverts for computer games, which usually have nothing to do with the real world anyway.

After having to read through a gruesome 'guts, gore, sex and so much more' edition of CRASH and writing about the horrific, shocking adverts I should NEVER have looked at, I think I deserve letter of the month. If however, I am not awarded the letter of the month I will send you a million copies of the *Sweevo's World* advertisement. This may encourage you, unless you are bald (You probably are) to 'spike' your hair. And then your Mary Whitehouse type contributors would never speak or write to you again. And it would serve you right! This is definitely the letter of the Year never mind the month.

Kirsty Downie, Edinburgh

HEAR HEAR! Well, perhaps not quite Letter of the Year, but I do think you deserve a secondary Letter of the Month runner-up prize, so I'm authorising the release of a £12 software voucher to you Kirsty (as a special concession for the month of May!

SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST

Dear Sir,
While in my local computer shop recently, I couldn't help noticing how the number of computers and computer games have declined.

Do you remember the Christmas of 1984? When computers were on the television every night and how we were being told of sales which were at phenomenal levels. These were the days when there was a 2-week waiting list to buy a computer and the shelves were overflowing with computer software.

So what happened between then and now? Could it be the Conservative philosophy of 'survival of the fittest'? Could it be the recession? Or could it be that everyone who wants a computer has one? It is hard to say, but a parallel can be drawn between the home computer side of the market and the business side.

This side of the computer market is also in decline, and some may say it is because of the reasons already given. But there could be another reason.

With the research and development which went into designing bigger and better business computers being put to use, machines were developed which are more sophisticated and reliable. This sophistication and reliability combined with the correct software backup means that computer systems will remain more advanced for a longer time. This will result in a business which will be less willing to spend money on a new computer system when they already have a fairly reliable, if slightly dated, system.

So what has this got to do with the home computer market? Well, with the introduction of the Spectrum 128K, it is clear to see that Clive Sinclair is taking a great risk. I am sure that everybody will agree with me that introduction of a 128K Spectrum is welcome and fascinating and the prospect of playing 128K games and adventures is exciting. But the problem will be with sales. Many Spectrum owners will be unwilling to sell their 48K machines and buy a 128K which will mean that Sir Clive will lose a potentially large market.

So what is the solution? Well I can't offer one, it is up to the individual whether he or she is willing to part with their 48K to buy a 148K. But I am sure that many people, like myself, will be unwilling to do this, with the result that the 128K will not be as much of a success as the 48K was. But whatever the result, I hope that Sir Clive does not come up for as much criticism as he has had for some of his other ventures.

Joseph Fyfe, Greenfield, Glasgow

There certainly isn't the atmosphere that used to exist, shops aren't as full of goods and many retailers are less enthusiastic altogether about computers and computer games. But you have put the argument in a neat nutshell. The British purchased more home computer hardware per capita than any other nation in an amazingly short time. Hardware sales have just reached saturation point, so it isn't altogether surprising that there is a corresponding fall in shop stocks. Upgrading every year when a new device appears becomes financially impossible, not only for the individual, but also for companies, and you may be right that this syndrome will hit the 128.

As you'll see, I've received many letters about the advent of the 128 — what follows is just a selection . . .

LM

ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY EIGHT!

Dear CRASH
We have just read your review of the new Spectrum 128, and are writing to inform you of our experience with two of these machines.

In 128 Mode everything worked perfectly, however, 48K mode was a different story. Firstly we tried to load *Fairlight*, and no matter what we tried it always crashed before reaching the loading screen.

Next we tried *Elite*, this loaded in okay but then newed itself when the first code was typed in. At first we put this down to the dreaded Lenslok, but after many attempts we came to the conclusion that it must be the machine — normally three attempts are allowed at getting the right code. On to the next program, *Finders Keepers*, this would only run without our Kempston joystick interface plugged in the back, however, unplugging this interface made no difference to *Fairlight* or *Elite*. *Dark Star* was tried next, this seemed to run okay but the graphics near the top of the screen were badly distorted. *Alien 8* loaded and ran without any problem, *Full Throttle* crashed at the first attempt, but ran okay second try.

We were now running out of testing time (PATIENCE), so finally we plugged in a Kempston Centronics 'E' interface, the computer 'locked up' and the attached printer went berserk. The moral to this story is plain to see — if any CRASH readers are contemplating buying a 128, they would be wise to take along some programs to try before parting with any hard-earned cash.

All the above mentioned software loads first time and runs perfectly on an ordinary Spectrum.

Mel and Steve Sherry, Bridgnorth, Shropshire

Anyone else experiencing loading problems? I read in Popular Computing Weekly *that the mail order house, Speedysoft, has compiled a list of programs that in their current form won't work on the 128. They are:* Alien 8, Elite, Enigma Force, Fairlight, Four Adventures (Global), Hypersports, Impossible Mission, Knight Lore, Movie, Laser Basic and Laser Compiler, Macadam Bumper, Nick Faldo's Open, Nightshade, Now Games, Now Games II, Steve Davis Snooker, Spitfire 40, Swords & Sorcery, Their Finest Hour (CDS), They Sold a Million, Think! (Ariolasoft), Tomahawk, Waterloo (Lothlorien), Winter Games, Way of the Tiger.

This list isn't complete, and some software houses are already working on 128 compatible versions, especially on recent titles.

LM

ALL ITS CRACKED UP TO BE?

Dear Lloyd,
When I heard about the launch of the 128K Spectrum, I immediately thought two things: 1. Sinclair will have given the new Spectrum a decent 3 channel sound chip. 2. The extra memory will have been put to good use providing an adequate screen display. Well as you know, Uncle Clive gave us the sound but not the screen.

The Commodore has a full colour display, with individual pixels that can be set to one of eight colours and this with only 64K of memory! So why hasn't this been done for the 128K or even 48K(!) Spectrum?

Back in the days of the ZX81, this machine was given two unheard of things by third-party peripheral manufacturers - Hi-res graphics, and colour! (The Hi-res was a software implementation by 'Software Farm')

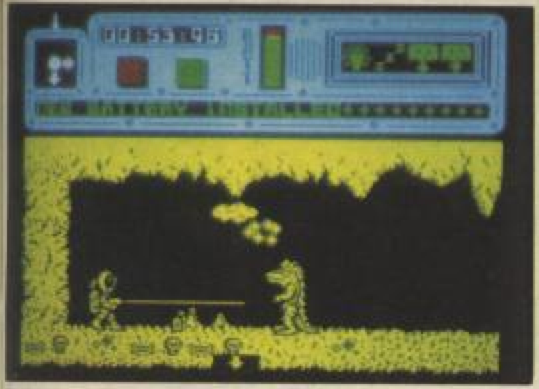
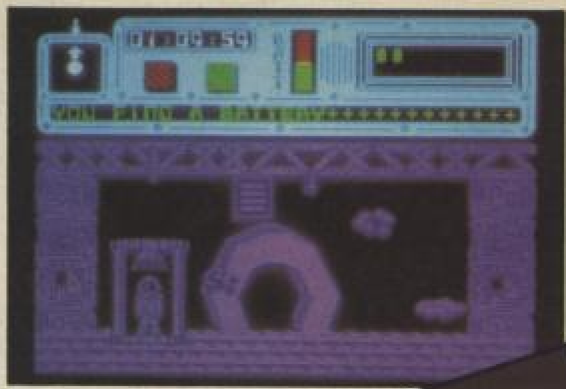
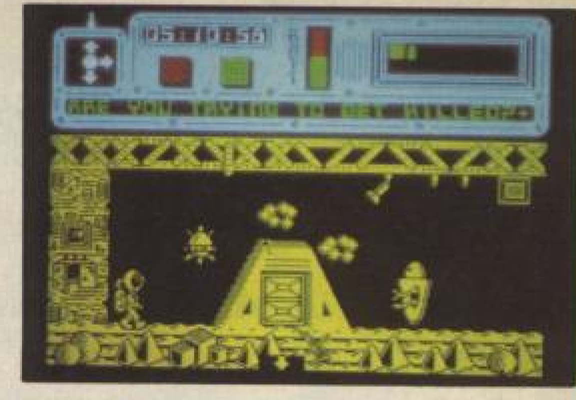
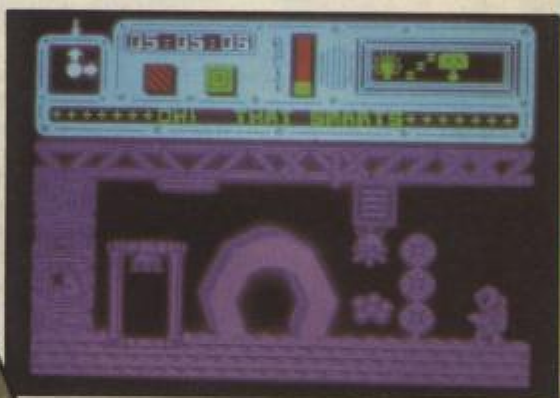
If these minor miracles could be achieved on a ZX81, then why hasn't any software/hardware house come-up with a proper full-colour Spectrum display? Imagine *Exploding Fist* with full colour and sound (almost as good as the Commodore 64 version?) or *Movie* with colour! Just think if the phrase 'there are some attribute problems' was removed from the reviewer's vocabulary!

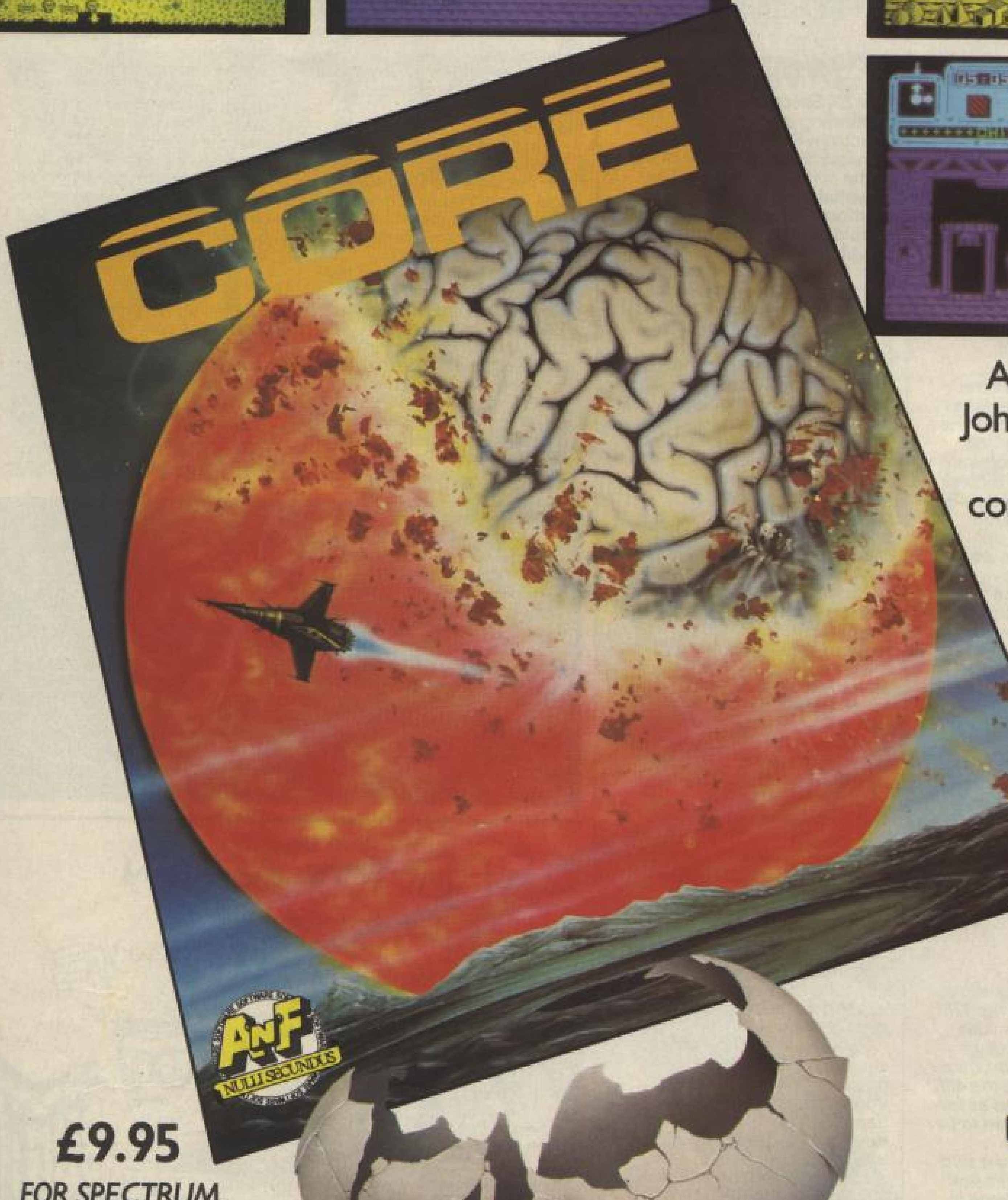
Okay guys, how about it?

Peter Dann, Lowestoft, Suffolk

An old complaint made good yet again! It does seem a shame that the 128 has only opted for better sound when it comes to the machine's presentation.

LM



Available from
John Menzies and
all good
computer stores

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COMMODORE 64
AND AMSTRAD

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AFTER THE EGG COMES...

CORE

ENCY TRANSMISSION . . . EMERGENCY . . . EMERGENCY TRANSMISSION . . . EMERGENCY . . . EMERGENCY TRANSM

Distress signals received from Eroc I suggest all human life threatened . . .
Expect to find terminal situation . . . Prepare accordingly . . .

From A 'n' F comes CORE; teleport into this fully animated, icon-driven adventure and explore over one thousand full-screen locations. Will you find the pieces of the scattered brain and put it back together before yours falls apart?

In case of difficulty, Core can be obtained from Argus Press Software Ltd., Greenwood House, Dewhurst Street, Darwen, Lancs. BB3 2EN.



128 GOOD AND BAD

Dear Lloyd,
As the long awaited 128K Spectrum has finally arrived. I will sum up what in my opinion are it's good and bad points.

Firstly the good points; a bigger memory, a better sound chip, a tape tester and a calculator mode. An added advantage is that you can run old 48K programs on it. Which brings me to another rather debatable point; will the 48K machines now become redundant?

For example let's take the 16K Spectrum which as far as I know was released before the 48K version. It was the first home computer that software companies other than Sinclair wrote games for but as the 48K machine was released this software supply dried up because the producers wrote games for the more powerful version. This makes me wonder whether this situation will now occur with the release of the 128K version.

Here is another example; After many hours of arduous game playing I finally escaped from the castle in *Fairlight* and was told that the sequel was called *A Trail of Darkness*, but on reading that this was being released on the 128 I wasn't too happy.

I am however not against the idea of the 128 but I do think this is a valid point.
Iain Mayhew, Burton-on-Trent, Staffs

Well, as we've just seen, not all 48K games will run on the 128! You're right that those who purchased a 16K Spectrum soon found themselves unable to play new titles once the 48K Spectrum was released as few software houses wanted to be bound by the memory limitation. I have heard it said that some programmers feel they can write more game in 48K than most other programmers could manage in 128, but there's no doubt that the extra memory will ensure lazier programming techniques can be used to provide games that might not actually contain more than a 48K game does now, and therefore the attractions of the extra memory available will mean a gradual phasing out of 48K games. However — and it's a big however — that will ultimately depend on marketing, because if insufficient Spectrum 128s are sold, then there won't be the sales incentive for software houses. We'll have to wait and see.
LM

THE WORLD OF DIFFERENCE

Dear CRASH,
There's a world of difference in the 128? The UK launch of the new ZX Spectrum 128 and the continuing sales of the Spectrum Plus will surely increase Sinclair's share of the home computer market. The advantage of the extra memory and improved sound should open up all sorts of possibilities, especially for new software but will the standard of 48K software fall as a result of software houses starting to concentrate in developing and producing software for the 128? The special 'Tape Tester' option could help solve loading problems associated with Turbo/Hyperloaders. Will existing Spectrum Plus or 48K owners abandon their machines for the 128 or perhaps wait for the official upgrade kit from Sinclair!?

When software houses advertise their games early, before they have been released or even exist, and people send off money direct to them, they are only judging the gamer on the advertisement. I usually wait for previews or reviews of a game advertised before buying it from a discount mail order company at a saving of £2.04. Although the standard and quality of programming and software has greatly advanced and improved over the years, the cost should have stayed at a reasonable level compared to today's high prices. Is the high cost of software partly due to the development of anti-piracy methods? Is there more difficulty in using Lenslok or loading hyperloaders? The saga continues.

Finally, I think the overall content, layout and presentation of CRASH has improved lately, but what has happened to the 'Games Reviewed' index in the last two issues?

Lloyd, will you be ordering a 2001 Hermes 'artificial intelligence' machine for the future!?
Colin Reekie, St Monans, Fife

I won't say anything about your 128 comments! Glad you like the look of CRASH lately, it was about time for a bit of a design revamp. The Games reviewed Index has suffered for the reason that, I'm told, both the last issues were a bit late in 'going to bed', and obviously you can't say what game is on what page until they are all laid out, and that didn't finish until it was too late to typeset the index. Why should I need a machine with artificial intelligence when I've got Robin Candy nearby — his intelligence is all artificial!

MORE 128 NON-LOADERS

Dear Lloyd,
I am writing to tell you about the problems I have come across with my 128K Spectrum.

First I got a Cheetah Interface, but certain software will not work with it in eg *Mikie* and *The Incredible Shrinking Fireman*, with the interface out or the DK'tronics interface they work.

I tested both games on my brother's 48K and they both work so it seems its just the 128K and the Cheetah Interface may not be compatible with certain games — without interface the following games don't work. *Gerry the Germ*, *Rasputin* and *Runestone* by Firebird. Also *Nodes of Yesod* by Odin will not work on the 128K.

Now can you help me? What has happened to *Street Hawk*? I have been waiting since August 1985 for my free copy with the subscription. My mum has already written to the subscription department and got no reply. When will it ever drop through my letter box?
Jason Naylor, Leeds 14

Thank you for your list of non-loaders, Jason. Street Hawk *is, believe it or not, still 'on the way' from Ocean. Regarding your subscription copy, you should by now have received a letter from the subs dept with more detail.*
LM

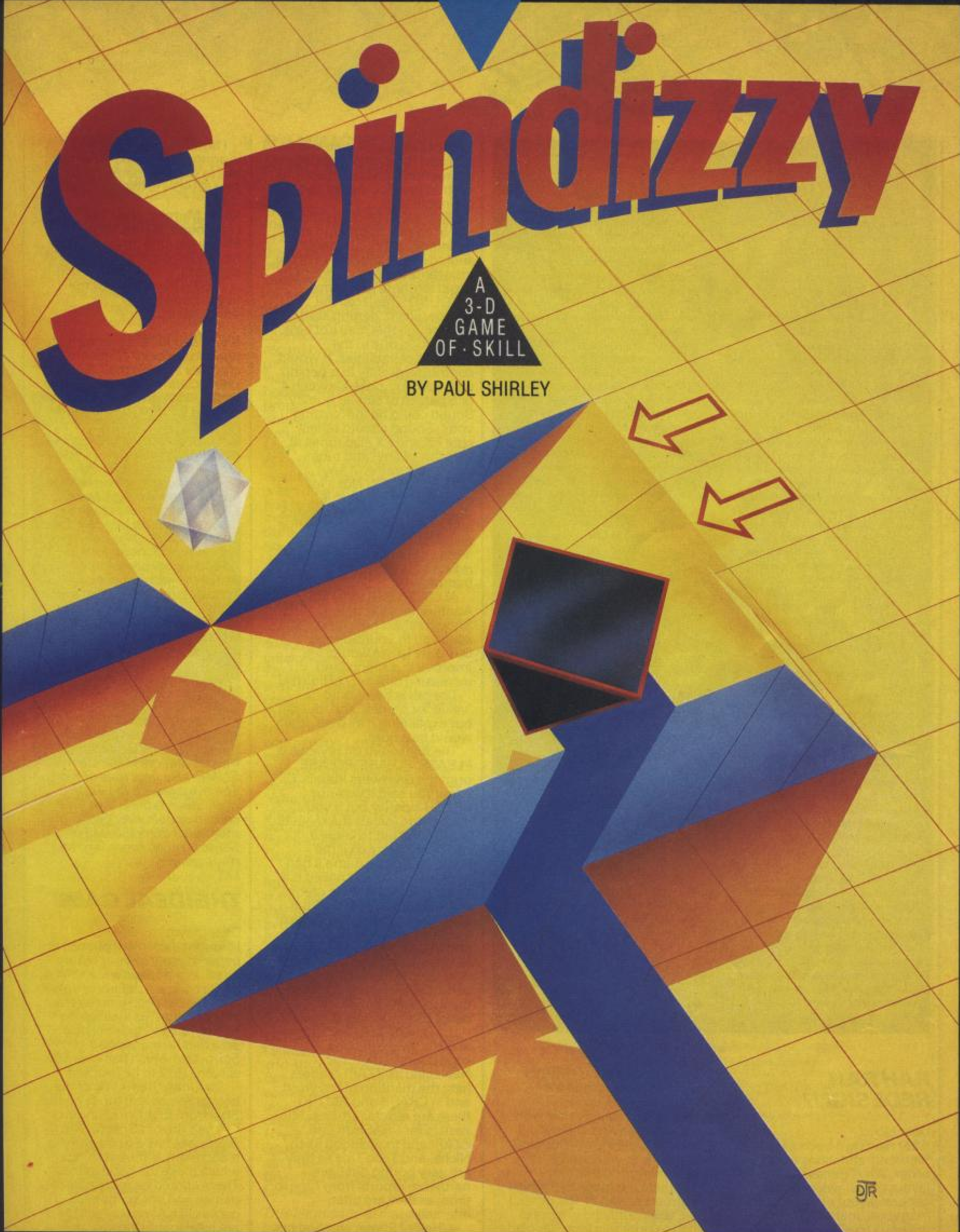
WHAT HAPPENED TO SABOTEUR?

Dear Lloyd,
Could you please tell me what has happened to the *Saboteur* map? We were told it would 'appear' in the March edition, but so far it has not 'appeared' in the March edition!

Thanks for a great mag! Keep up the good work!
Matthew Bradley, Wembury, Plymouth

Ah, thereby hangs a tail! The original typesetting for the comp suffered a glitch in transfer between one computer and another, causing the unnoticable (until you read it carefully) loss of some vital words. Consequently we extended the comp's deadline to be fair to everyone, and there should be a map in the June issue.
LM





Electric Dreams
SOFTWARE

Available on the 48K Spectrum, Amstrad and Commodore 64 from Electric Dreams Software, 31 Carlton Crescent, Southampton.
Telephone: (0703) 229694.

"Spindizzy is quite simply one of THE most impressive games on ANY home micro" OVERALL 98% – *AMTIX*

"Spindizzy combines marvellous graphics, testing puzzles and a large area to make a stunningly original and challenging game" AA RATING 96% *AMSTRAD ACTION*

BEGINNERS SECTION



MULTI-SCREEN SHOT – AMSTRAD VERSION



THE CULT OF PERSONALITY

Dear Lloyd,
I'm writing about your method of reviewing, which I really do think is seriously flawed. The fact is, ZZAP! have got at least one idea right, and that is the identification of the reviewers. Now this argument has been mentioned in the pages of CRASH before, but the suggestion that we would take the opinion of some reviewers with a 'pinch of salt' is not the case. With ZZAP!, the reader can identify with the reviewer, and build up an idea of his tastes and attitudes, in CRASH, you don't have the foggiest idea who's writing what and it can cause confusion.

My first example is *Dun Darach*. This is the highest rated CRASH game ever, and has probably the most complimentary comments. But the attitude with which they are written is infuriating. I quote, 'A must for any respectable Spectrum owner' Well I thought, I'm wasting my Spectrum according to CRASH unless I buy *Dun Darach*, so I did. Of course I hated it, because the strongest adventure I can take is *Cauldron*, I couldn't be bothered to map *Airwolf* and solving obscure clues I do not like. Yet CRASH pursuaded me that, quote.'If you liked *Tir Na Nog* (or even if you didn't) you will love *Dun Darach*.

But my argument comes into play, when in the *Sweevo's World* review, two of the reviewers gave the impression that they didn't enjoy Gargoyle's previous games. So either their opinions have changed, or they are different reviewers. But do we know which? Another option would be for you to categorise your magazine more.

Adventure and strategy are reviewed independently, yet arcade adventure and shoot em ups, arguably the most popular areas of gaming, are lumped together. Perhaps if reviewers, annonymous if they wish, only reviewed one type of game, their comments would be more trustworthy.

Again another example where this control is lacking is shown in the review of *Beach Head II*, when two out of three of the reviewers claimed they didn't like 'mindless violence', and that we should avert our attention to more 'intellectually stimulating' games.

Now obviously, these were not the same reviewers who smashed *Commando* which, let's face it, is the simplest form of game possible. Of course the reviewers could just have been needlessly vindictive about the game?

Well, there are my views and I'd be interested to hear your's Lloyd.

Mark Clive Wynne (15), Chester

Some good points there, Mark. You are, of course, right to doubt that the people involved in the Raid Over Moscow *review were the same as those doing the* Commando *review. At the outset CRASH had a relatively small pool of reviewers, Matthew Uffindell, Chris Passey, Roger Kean and myself to be specific, with occasional aid from a very few others. This meant far more consistency of opinion. Things have changed, and CRASH now has quite a large pool upon which to draw. There's a feeling here among the reviewing team that they should be identified at least by their initials. Graeme Kidd says he is waiting to see the final outcome of the Questionnaire to see whether there is popular consent for any major alterations to the reviews. In the meantime, the Powers That Be are considering your letter. If any other readers feel strongly about this identification business, I'd be glad to know.*
LM

RAH RAH, REDESIGN?

Dear Lloyd,
After reading March's issue I feel congratulations are in order. Why? Because of the layout of reviews and the general layout of the magazine, that's why. The previous layouts were very good but this far surpasses any previous standard your magazine has set and the issue is the best in my collection.

But the real reason I wrote is to suggest a few alterations to your 90% (In my opinion) perfect mag in an attempt to reach the 100% perfect mag. If you print this letter (which I know you won't) and invite other readers to write in, agreeing or disagreeing with me, I am convinced they will back me up. This will hopefully end up with your staff concurring and therefore complete the magazine which is streets ahead of any other. I feel you could do far worse than to print this letter instead of some loony letters you occasionally print. I've numbered the points.

1. The Ratings: Only a slight (!) change here, changing 2 marks. They are set out in a similar fashion to the review system in ZZAP! and AMTIX!

PRESENTATION: (Replaces 'Use of Computer' which is rubbish) Reflects packaging, instructions, on screen options such as joystick makes and definable keys.

GRAPHICS: Should reflect use of colour, animation and definition, although marks should not be knocked off if the programs are two colour to avoid attribute problems.

SOUND: (replaces the pointless(ish) 'getting started')

Although this may not be a valid rating due to the Speccy's capabilities. It would contribute greatly to a person who has to choose between 4 or 5 games of similar quality. Sound could be the 'casting vote'. Sound should reflect spot FX and FX also tunes at the start (if any) and tunes during the game (if any)

PLAYABILITY: Not a lot needs to be said on this. Should reflect ease of joystick and key control (although that could be included in 'Presentation' also of course reflects the game play (naturally)

ADDICTIVE QUALITIES: Another familiar rating. Should reflect how long it will keep you to your Speccy. Difficulty levels would improve this rating (and increasing difficulty of course).

The other two would be 'value for money' and 'overall' but explaining it all over again would be a bore.

The final point on reviews is PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE print the reviewers initials. I know you said it was not CRASH's policy but if you printed the initials the readers could soon get to know a reviewer's taste so if the reviewer gives a game a bad review you would know if it is because of his taste in games.

2. CRASH COURSE: What utter rot! As the average age of a CRASH reader is 17 and a bit, and the biggest single amount is 14 year olds (me included) why devote these pages to 2% of the CRASH readers to whom the magazine pages are devoted, ie the young people.

3. TECH NICHE, Tech Tips and Hardware utilities. A controversial topic for Newsfield as ZZAP! readers hate the mention of the word and in CRASH and AMTIX! there are regular articles. My wish is for CRASH to join ZZAP! and to abandon Tech Niche, and Tech Tips as they are very boring but have hardware reports from time to time, as they are often interesting.

4. Hall of Slime: Not bad but the ZZAP! high score table is better as you can look up the relevant score instead of going through the entire page(s) in the hope of finding a couple of scores. Also, the ZZAP! challenge is a great idea and I would love to see it incorporated into CRASH!

I hope against hope that this is printed as I would very much like to read the perfect mag. And CRASH is the only mag close.

Kevin Murphy, (Age 14), Llandough, S Glamorgan

PS My life long ambition is to have a letter printed in CRASH so please, instead of Jim'll fix it . . . LLOYD'LL FIX IT for me. I live in hope and in anticipation.

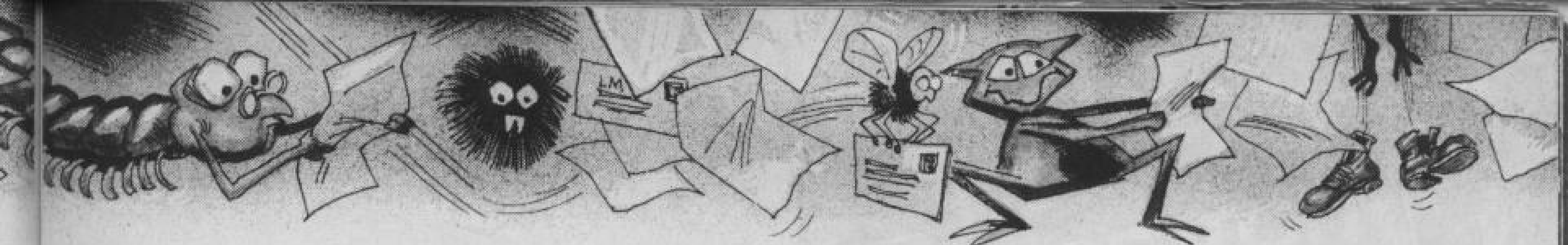
It's nice to fulfil someone's life ambition, Kevin. There are changes afoot in the CRASH ratings, although again, I have to say a final decision is waiting for the Questionnaire results.

As for your other points — naming the reviewers, I've already covered. CRASH COURSE — my answer is that because the average age of CRASH readers is as high as 17 plus, it indicates a large adult readership too, and they have kids (some of them) and THEY want to know something about the educational software market. And let's face it, if we don't do it — who is! TECH NICHE and all the sub-niches are proving very popular judging by the response, and CRASH is here to cater to as many people as possible. A CRASH CHALLENGE — well one is planned for the next issue, although whether it will be a regular feature is another matter, and the HALL OF SLIME, also gets tons of mail. The trouble with the ZZAP! High Score table is that only certain people ever get a mention, I think the Hall of Slime is much more fun for more people.
LM

THE IDEAL GAME

Dear Lloyd,
I thought that I must put pen to paper in reply to your asking on what our ideas were for the perfect game. I definitely agree with the old chap who wrote and said that his ideal game was to have a large playing area and he mentioned *Starquake* which has over 500 screens (512 to be precise).

Starquake has some of the best graphics and tunes on the Spectrum that I've seen since I've had the old Speccy. Also, *Starquake* has a good story to it and many different things which make it a good game. There should be more of these games and not so many 3D games like *Alien 8* which I find are total interest losers after about five goes. I'm sure some people out there will agree. Just look how well *Starquake* is doing in your charts, even I've got it! Games similar to this like *Underwurlde* have done well in your charts so can't the software companies see that this is what the game



players want? There is no escaping by saying 'not enough K for a mega game', of course there is so get going and give us more games like *Starquake*.
Freddie Tiernan, London N9

There's no doubt that you like Starquake*, Freddie! Well, and why not, it's a good game, but there are other types of game for different tastes, and I think even you would start moaning if EVERY game began to look like* Starquake*!*
LM

TOO LONG — TOO LONG

Dear Zoid,
I do not know any long words. I would be glad if you would tell me some long words so that when I read CRASH I will know what you mean by nidificated prorogation thermantidotis. Words with more than one part make me go all strange, so you could (i) Stop long words in CRASH (ii) Send me a book which shows what they mean (iii) Give me £12 of games and I will keep mum.
Frank Brew-no (alias Hojo Lines)

Tell you what, I'll stop using long words if you send me £12 and in exchange, I'll keep your mum.
LM

CANDY — THE MODEL

Dear High and Mighty Lloyd
This is it, you've had it! How do you expect to keep Robin Candy under control if you go and give him a new logo for his playing tips section. The Forum and Merely Mangram didn't get a new logo. Why should the Candyman get one instead? Come on Lloyd take control!

Finally is it Robin Candy who models the CRASH sweatshirts in the adverts?
David Payne

Modelling sweatshirts! You've got to be kidding! It's only since the advent of cool mirrored shades that you can get Robin in front of a camera lens at all. Well over a year ago, he did appear in a T-shirt for a few issues around the Chart. As to logos, you see I spend most time working and there's none left over for constantly pestering 'art' to give me one. Mind you, the Forum did get something of a facelift a few months ago, so I suppose I shouldn't moan too much anyway, and now I've been incorporated with the previews, I'm at least associated with some colour!
LM

PAYING FOR PROTECTION

Dear Sir Lloyd,
What next I ask myself, my friends and you? What 'bane' of Speccy owners will be developed to thwart our efforts to play good games? Lenslok two? (Aaaarghhh!!!! no, spare us such terrors)! Is it not enough for us to bear dodgy ULA's, loose power connectors, dot crawl and record breaking delivery problems? Obviously not, at least as far as ye software houses are concerned. A program, it seems, must not only be a challenge to play, but a challenge to gain access to. Must we all splash out enough £££s to buy a dongle device or resort to 42 gallons of coffee to wash down the front panel, just to get a copy of a game that will load? Yes seems to be the answer from the software houses.

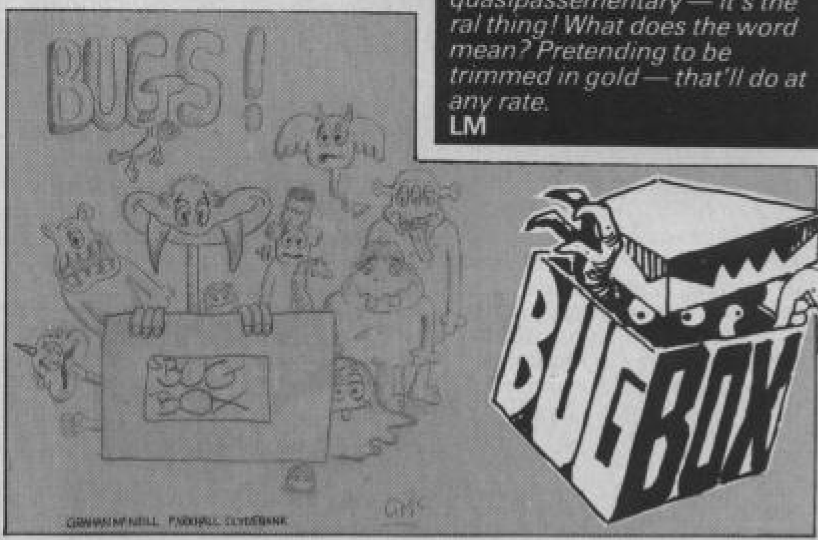
Don't they realise that we aren't all pirates, we don't want to have to copy their programs, but most of us simply can't afford to buy what we would like to, instead we swap; game X for game Y; crack *Elite* for cracked *Tomahawk* etc. (Lenslok is easy the only mildly challenging part is the loader)! Protection is fast becoming more ridiculous, as a comparison Lenslok is like needing a special stylus to listen to your favourite Jarre record (What do you mean? — 'Who's he?') or a pair of special glasses to watch BBC 1 (supplied for only 16p a day)! I find it appalling that someone, David Aubrey Jones, can make money out of something that has been the bane of all clean living Spectrum owners (Is that really his phone number in the Speedlock loader)? Perhaps I should turn my energies away from beating protection to making it, it's got to be more profitable, and more sociable selling protection to software houses. Anyway I must finish here, it's just over twenty minutes since I started being mildly serious and any more of this and I will definitely have to sit in the corner and chew the corners on my Lenslok, or play my preproduction copy of *Street Hawk*, if you think *The Great Space Race* was bad, then you ain't seen nothin' yet!
Brian McNeil, Bathgate, West Lothian

This letter calls to mind one some months back, that called for a return to turbo loaders because at least they were fast in loading and you didn't have to wade through tons of arcane protection! Still, at the risk of being called a capitalist lickspittle lackey in the pay of the giant uncaring software combines, a for point to consider might be that we end up with what we deserve, and for some two years the level of home copying was so alarmingly high that these kinds of protection devices were bound to be considered a necessity. That said, it still doesn't mean that the software houses are acting wisely in making games such a challenge to get into.
LM

LMLWD

Dear Lloyd,
Please can I have a copy of your long word dictionary.
Yours, (long word that I don't know YET) **Rebo Mudguard.**
PS What does quasipassementary mean?

I'm afraid it's way out of your budget, Rebo, because it isn't quasipassementary — it's the ral thing! What does the word mean? Pretending to be trimmed in gold — that'll do at any rate.
LM





MONOCHROME MOANS

Dear Lloyd,
I have written to you to appeal to all software houses with this message: What about us lot with B/W tellies! Over the eons (is that how you spell it?) that the dear old Speccy has been about, software houses have been churning out games designed for colour tellies or colour monitors.

All my mates and me have little B/W tellies which make some games impossible to play. Take the brilliant *Zoids* for example.I couldn't understand that 'Zoidar Power' bit in B/W and until I played the game in colour, I did not know what it was. Also, a 'Lenslok' is very difficult to use on a small B/W telly. It may be easy to use on your 100% perfect picture Cub monitor, but I had to load *Tomahawk* 7 times before I got it to work.

So Lloyd, I have a suggestion; Don't abolish the 'use of colour' comment at the end of each review, but just add something along the lines of 'Clearness and difference on a B/W telly'. Just think about it Lloyd, and try reviewing a few games on a crappy B/W telly.
Eddy Hunt, Stoke Mandeville, Bucks

You may be too young to remember when British TV turned to colour in the late sixties, but the same argument cropped up then, people moaning that suddenly every programme was in colour and yet most people still only had black and white sets, so they missed half of what was going on. This may have been a fair argument, but if TV had heeded it too strongly then the full potential of colour would never have been realised, and I think the same holds true for computer games. I know some titles are hard to see properly in mono, but the truth is that most computer owners do have colour tellies on which to play games, and the software houses can hardly be blamed for using colour to its best advantage.
LM

LM FAN CLUB

Dear Lloyd,
I have been thinking what you could do to improve CRASH. Well, I have come up with the Ultimate answer — THE LM FAN CLUB!

For the initial membership fee, you would get CRASH every month, free of course! — a signed photograph of you with a paper bag over your head — we don't want people to see what you look like now do we eh? — a badge with a typewriter on it, free software and of course a copy of your superb Long Word Dictionary. All this for only about £20 (you've got to pocket something haven't you)!

If you wish I could run it for you. If I do run it you could be a life member! — please enclose your £20 though — in software.

Great idea huh!
Ian King, Tipton, W Midlands

£20! The Long Word Dictionary is £350 alone (pre-budget price though). But seriously, there are some rumblings afoot in the Kidderie about a special CRASH CLUB with some extra goodies attached along with CRASH. No doubt someone will let me know soon what's happening on that front.
LM

QUESTIONNAIRE QUESTION MASTERS

Dear Lloyd,
Just one point, about the Questionnaire: What the hell has what you drink got to do with computers, eh? Sponsored by COKE are you?
Neil Brownlee, Galashiels, Scotland

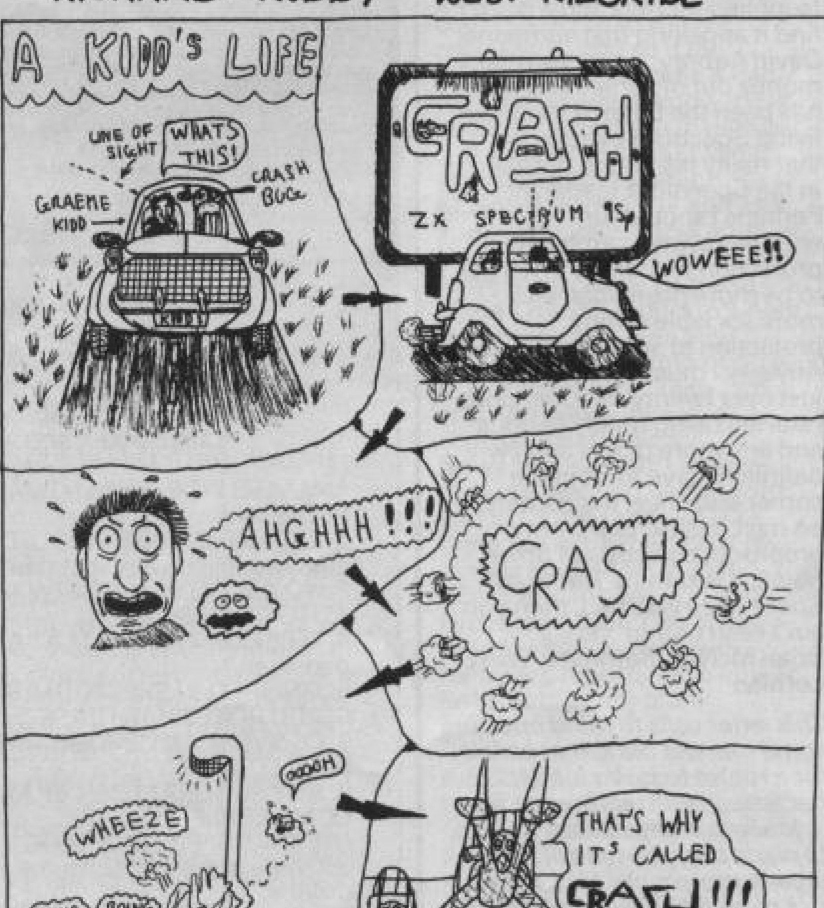
Simple, Neil, 'Just a Coke Candy' wants to know how many of his fans also drink the stuff. You weren't the only one to wonder about this . . .
LM

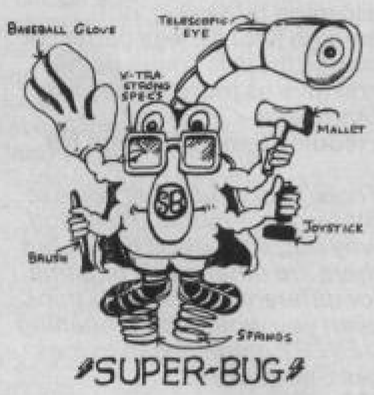
Dear Lloyd,
I have but two questions to ask on the Crashtionnaire. Why do you want to know what soft drink we buy, and how often we holiday abroad? Is this to find out what paper to print on, so that stains come out easily, or to let us know how many editions we can export/import without paying duty? Or is it that you're just plain nosey, eh?
Nicholas Green, Christchurch, Dorset

Just plain nosey I think, Nicholas. Of course, it may also have something to do with our advertising people being able to say to 'brand name' soft drinks manufacturers, 'look how many millions of our wonderful readers consume your product, why aren't you advertising in CRASH?' That way I might even get my next 'cost of living' salary increase to help pay for all those Candy Cokes.
LM



RICHARD RUDDY WEST KILBRIDE





A. HODGSON
HAXBY
YORKSHIRE

HAPPY FAMILIES

Dear Deardrie,
Please help, I'm going mad. Our darling little Speccy is taking over, I mean it has even got its very own room and a big colour telly all to its self. I've got a mother who makes her own sound effects to *Pac Man* and *Commando* — she starts screaming when she gets killed, goes 'Pow, pow, pow,' and 'Ha! I got you,' when she shoots people and goes, 'Yum, yum, yum,' when eating the energy pills in *Pac Man*.

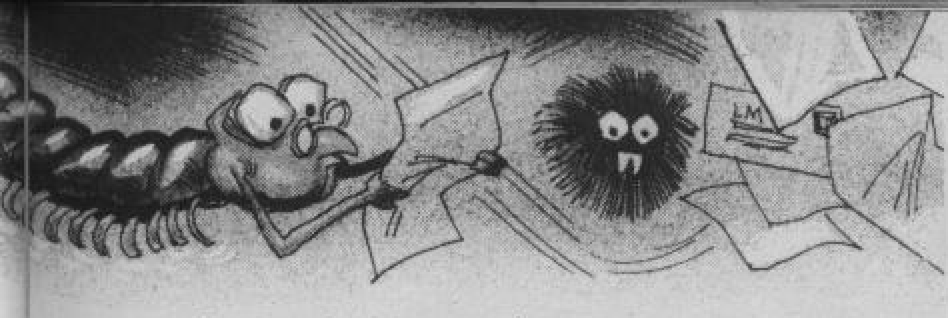
I've got two dogs who've absolutely no respect at all, and pee all over computer mags (except for CRASH). My brother seems to think that just because he paid for the Spectrum, he owns it! And he makes me watch him read every single word in CRASH, before I even get a glance. Probably the worst one in our family is our Dad — he's got absolutely no interest in computers at all. I'm the only sane one in the house.

Yours,
Anonymously For Obvious Reasons, Bodelwyddan, Clwyd

Who the hell's Deardrie? Look, luvvies, you've obviously got a very serious problem, but you know, luvvies, letting a Spectrum take over is perfectly normal, and nothing to be ashamed of, although I wouldn't let the neighbours know about it.
DEARDRIE

SPOILED FANTASY

Dear Sir,
Re Fantasy Software
I wonder if you could possibly help me. I recently bought my son a cassette for *Backpacker's Guide to the Universe*, Part I. When I got home, I discovered the code sheet was missing. It is a very good game, but useless without the code sheet. The



store offered to refund the money or suggested we wrote to Fantasy for the code sheet. I would, but there is no address. Can you help?
LJ Monte, Gillingham, Kent

You have a problem, I'm afraid, for Fantasy Software vanished into the haze without a word to anyone many moons ago. My advice, therefore, is to accept the refund.
LM

MORE ON HOME COPYING

Dear CRASH,
I have finally decided to write to your magazine . . .
My friend and I usually, when a new game is released, travel to Birmingham and split the cost of a game. Then one of us keeps the original, while the other has a copy; this is done alternately. However, now that turbo loaders and lenslocks etc have been introduced, this system is made obsolete. We now have two options: we can save for twice as long and buy a game each, or we can go halves on a game and take turns at having it. Both of these methods pose problems — the problem with the first solution is that my Mum doesn't approve of me buying games, which means that I have to save £1.00 a week until I have enough to buy a game and if I'm not going halves it takes twice as long to save up; the problem with the second method is that if we share one copy of a game, one of us has to wait a month before the other has 'finished' with it.

My argument is that commercial piracy should be stamped out, but the home copier should be allowed his or her freedom. For example, take a look at the record industry. It has not gone bust, when everybody knows that records are taped off the radio and also that people tape each other's records. If the software industry would buck its ideas up then I am sure that the same would apply. True, software houses have gone bust in the past, but that was mainly due to bad management and/or their games were so dire that no-one wanted to buy them. As you can see from the advertisements in any copy of CRASH, the reputable software houses are doing okay — such as Ultimate, Mikro-Gen, Ocean, Gargoyle and now Elite are entering the field after a slightly shaky start.

I'm not criticising the standard of software, in fact it is very high. I also realise how long it must take to produce a game of such quality, but the price is a different matter. What happened to the good old £5.50 *Lunar Jet Man* or *Atic Atac*? I do know about inflation, but an increase of £4.45 in less than two years is ridiculous, especially when Mastertronic can produce games for a third of the price of most games nowadays, but with the same high standard. Just look at *Spellbound* . . .

'What we have here, is a hypocrite,' I hear you saying, 'telling me how good these games are, and then copying them himself.' Well, in the two years that I have had my Spectrum I have bought 33 originals (No, I'm not rich!), which comes to about £200. I know at least three people who have more, but the software industry seems to expect us to spend even more money on games. Preventing us from copying game will NOT, I repeat NOT, make us buy more.

Also, the main reason I copy games is not because I play on my computer every minute of the day, but because I collect them, as do many of my friends at school. Out of the 200 or so games in my collection, I would have purchased around 20 (and did) if I had known what they were like before I ventured to buy them.

So take heed, dear software houses, or you may well find yourselves losing the lead to companies like Mastertronic!
Mark Fernihough, Bromsgrove, Worcs

I think that's about the best reasoned plea for leaving home copiers alone, that I've read yet, and generally, your arguments about some of the price increases in recent months is very well founded of course. Although the law now officially frowns upon the habit, most software companies sensibly realised a long time ago that the activities of the home copier were unpreventable and not perhaps as madly damaging as was at first supposed. However, comparisons with the music business are a bit invidious because, although nothing much is made of it any longer, the advent of the cassette recorder did cause an enormous dent in recording revenue and corresponding alarm, then despondency. Perhaps it's something any part of the entertainment business has to suffer.
LM

Sorry, but that fills up the Forum for May. if you have any points to make about software, purveyors of same, reviewers of similar or vendors of like material, then you know the address, but in case you don't, it's LLOYD MANGRAM'S FORUM, CRASH MAGAZINE, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB

Crash Competition



WAY OF THE POINT

Mirrorsoft have brought an ancient and venerable Oriental Martial Art to your Spectrum — SAI KARATE. As you will learn from the review this issue, Sai Karate is a varation on traditional Karate, and involves a special pointy stick known as a Sai which is used to make attacking and defensive moves in combat.

The wonderful Pat Bitton of Mirrorsoft is offering a course of Martial Arts lessons to the value of £100 to the lucky winner of this competition, and no less than ten runners up will receive a one year subscription to FIGHTERS, the martial arts magazine published by Peterson Publishing. Not a bad deal for fighting fans, but there's more — everyone who enters the comp will receive an A4 poster from Mirrorsoft.

All sorts of weird and wonderful weapons are used in the Oriental Martial arts. This minion happens to know that most of the ancient forms of combat that evolved in the Orient have their roots with the peasantry, who had to find ways of defending themselves with everyday objects against bands of marauding baddies. Thus hoes, poles, lengths of chain and rice flails were called into service and elaborate fighting styles evolved around them.

There's no shortage of peasant types in CRASH Towers, you know. Quite a few neat combat moves have evolved over the past months as pitched battles between CRASH and ZZAP! reviewers have taken place.



TY STICK

Win £100 worth of Martial Arts training

Lumpy Liddon, for instance is a master of the De Grays Food-fight technique, driving off potential territorial invaders with a quick spurt of chicken fat or a barrage of crumbs and sandwich parts delivered orally with all the precision of a homing missile. Anyone who messes with Mr Liddon ends up in a mess!

The evil strategist, Masterson has turned his diminutive size to full advantage, and the humble 3 inch disc in his hands has all the combat efficacy (LMLWD) of a Ninja Star. Cross Masterson, and he bides his time, strategically, popping up at a moment when your guard is down to spin a disc at knee height towards your legs. Ouch! They ought to be called limp discs, not floppy discs.

Up in the Art room, our very own Oliver Frey has taken to chemical warfare. Apart from having the ability to cover an aggressive minion from head to toe in lurid green ink with a blast from his airbrush, he has a stock of specially flavoured, highly pongy inks. Three blasts with Agent Orange, as a particularly niffy shade of orange airbrush ink has been named, and the Artroom clears.

Ten subscriptions to FIGHTERS to be won!

Your Humble Competition Minion is proud to reveal that narcolepsy (LMLWD) is his main defensive system. The simplest form of defence is kip, according to yours truly. Falling to the floor and starting to snore loudly at the instant the body reaches the horizontal is guaranteed to phase the most ardent opponent. Occasionally artefacts found in the broom cupboard can be called into use for attacking moves — a sharp flick with the business end of a damp duster is quite capable of inflicting a debilitating quantity of pain, for instance.

To enter this competition, you will have to come up with a new form of twentieth century martial art. Select a couple of everyday objects and press them into service as weapons in a fighting system. Describe your new martial art as fully as you can, perhaps listing the classical moves or maybe even photographing or drawing a combat sequence.

The best Beginner's Training Manual for a new martial art to arrive at WAY OF THE POINTY STICK COMPETITION, CRASH, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB by 29th May will win the course of Martial Arts instruction — the winner can specify the Art he or she wants to study and Mirrorsoft will arrange for your local instructor to receive some loot!

Best of luck!

Martech is one of the original home computer software houses — they were around right at the beginning of this wondrous industry. Graeme Kidd took a (long) trip down to the south coast, just by Eastbourne, to meet the men from Martech.

PROGRAMMING IN PEVENSEY BAY



You have been chosen to save the human race by finding eight alien capsules and decoding the message they contain.

Zooming through space on your mission to find the eight capsules that have been placed in space, one on each planet in the solar system, your main viewscreen shows the action as you fight your way through asteroid belts and meteor storms.

Damage control indicates the number of hits your craft has taken so far on the journey to Saturn. Once you've played the Alien Game, loaded in separately, and got a few clues on how to go about opening the capsules on the planets, it's time go; select the space travel icon and zoom into space.

The three icon windows to the right of the main viewscreen access the onboard computer's information banks, from which you can call up maps and planetary data.



Wahey, Hey! You've found the capsule hidden on Saturn's surface. Did you get far enough in the ALIEN GAME to get the appropriate clue? If you did, the capsule can be opened and another part of the solution to Earth's problems can be collected. The Aliens who left the capsules behind and beamed their game down to Earth in the middle of a major crisis must have a strange sense of humour. Why couldn't they just send a Telemessage?

The Main part of the PLANETS game loads your ship into the 48K Spectrum with data for Mercury, Venus and Earth. Further loads are needed before you can explore further afield in the solar system, with two or three planets contained in each sub program. 128 owners get it all in one.

As you make progress in the game, you'll find your capabilities are extended! Crack the code first, tell Martech and there's a neat telescope on offer, it seems.



A safe landing has been achieved, and landing gear down, your ship is on the surface of Neptune. Once the spacecraft is in orbit around a planet, selecting the appropriate icon calls up a targetting grid and the aim of the game is to land next to the capsule left on that planet by the aliens. Fuel is limited, and careful control is needed to make a safe landing, taking into account the local gravity and atmosphere. Use too much fuel in the descent, and you'll never see home again!

The three icon windows on the left allow you to examine a capsule when you come across one, engage the computer systems during landing and travel, and call up details of the local terrain and conditions while capsule hunting.

A QUICK PEEK AT PROGRESS ON THE PLANETS

A couple of years ago, people stopped calling David Martin 'Sir'.

Not that he was unfrocked as a knight of the realm — he stopped being a chemistry teacher (called 'Sir' during the day) and part time software house boss, becoming an ex chemistry teacher and full time software publisher.

David has always had a keen interest in games: before the ZX80, he was teaching chemistry by day and designing board games in his spare time, with some commercial success. David's brother in-law, John Barry, got used to visiting the Martin household and finding counters and half-designed boardgames covering the carpet in the front room. The board game business began to build up, and although John 'hates' board games, he got involved commercially with the young company founded by David.

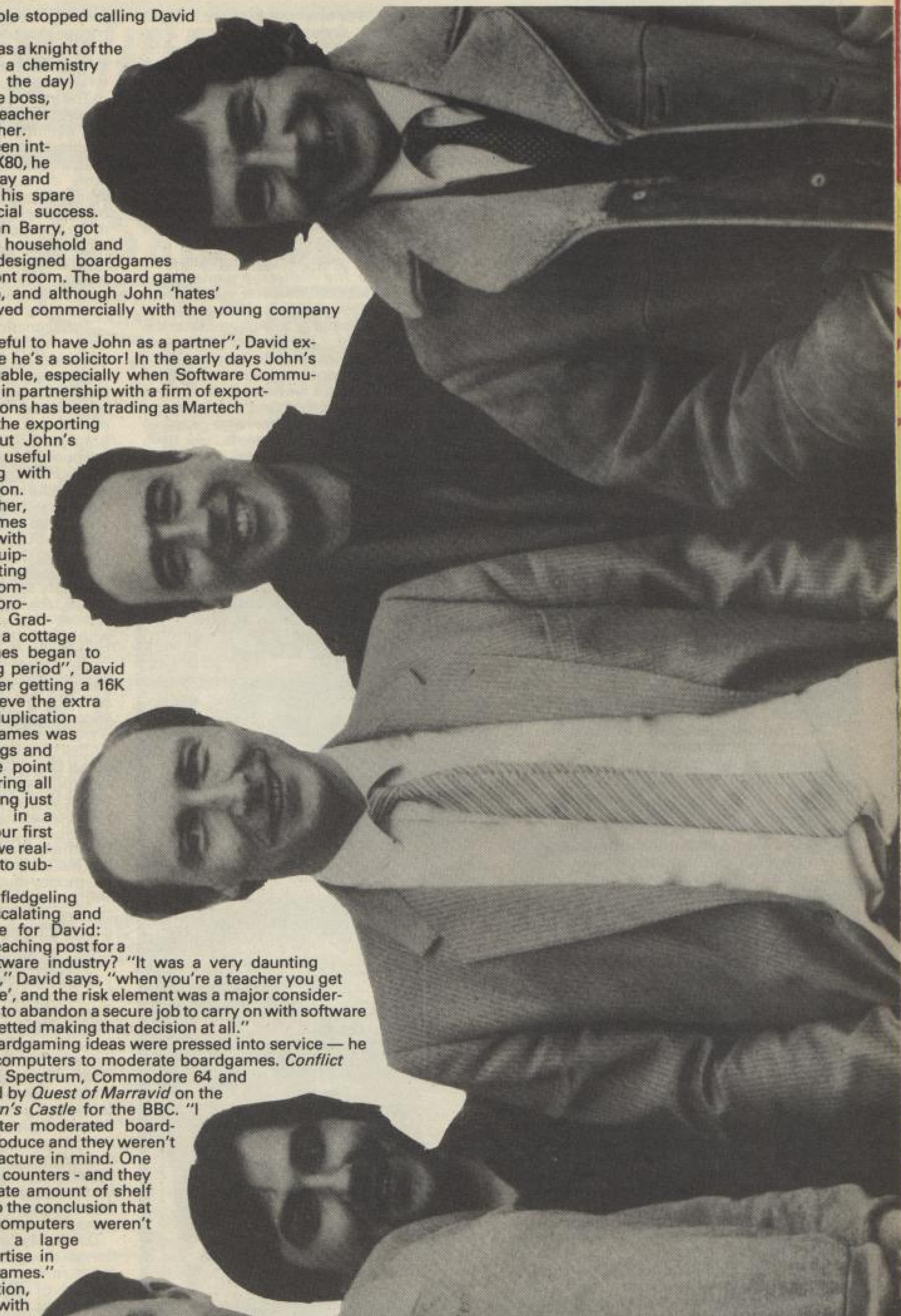
"It was and still is very useful to have John as a partner", David explains, "and not just because he's a solicitor! In the early days John's legal experience was invaluable, especially when Software Communications Ltd was first set up in partnership with a firm of exporters." Software Communications has been trading as Martech for quite a while now, and the exporting partnership has expired, but John's legal experience is still very useful when it comes to dealing with licensing agreements and so on.

While he was a teacher, David's interest in games moved him to experiment with the school's computer equipment, and he began writing games. As soon as the ZX computers arrived, he began programming games at home. Gradually a hobby turned into a cottage industry and Martech games began to expand. "It was an amazing period", David recalls, "I can still remember getting a 16K RAM pack — I couldn't believe the extra memory!". To begin with, duplication and despatch of Martech games was all done at home, in evenings and weekends. "We got to the point where we were manufacturing all weekend, and one day, having just manufactured ten games in a morning and just received our first large order for WH Smiths, we realised we were going to have to subcontract."

The level of activity at the fledgeling Martech Games began escalating and soon it was decision time for David: should he give up a secure teaching post for a full time career in the software industry? "It was a very daunting decision to make at the time," David says, "when you're a teacher you get used to being 'securely broke', and the risk element was a major consideration. I realised I would have to abandon a secure job to carry on with software sensibly, and I've never regretted making that decision at all."

To begin with, David's boardgaming ideas were pressed into service — he saw the potential of using computers to moderate boardgames. *Conflict* and *Galaxy Conflict* for the Spectrum, Commodore 64 and BBC machine were followed by *Quest of Marravid* on the C64 and Vic 20 and *Gisburn's Castle* for the BBC. "I soon realised that computer moderated boardgames were expensive to produce and they weren't really designed with manufacture in mind. One game, for instance, had 140 counters - and they all took up a disproportionate amount of shelf space in the shops. I came to the conclusion that boardgames involving computers weren't viable unless you were a large company with lots of expertise in producing traditional boardgames."

Martech changed direction, becoming involved with 'personality' games. "It didn't take long for me to work out that my programming talents were limited", David admits, "and the time I had available to learn programming was limited by my involvement with the commercial side of running a business." It was time to hire in some programming talent. ▶



The MARTECH Reception Committee. From bottom to top: Ian McArdle, John Wilson, David Martin, Malcolm Smith and John Barry

Ian McArdle has been with Martech, right from the start of the personality games stage of the company's life. He wrote *Eddie Kidd's Jump Challenge*, and is currently part of the team working on *The Planets* — but more of that anon. Martech's games have consistently involved licences or personalities: Eddie Kidd, Brian Jacks, Geoff Capes, Zoids and now Sam Fox, and The Planets (a TV series and book).

"Obviously, a licence helps with marketing", David states, "but we find that a licence often helps to prompt or develop a game idea. Personally I like simulation games, and it's great to have someone involved who can provide accurate facts and figures which can be incorporated in the game. Our first licence game, *Eddie Kidd's Jump Challenge* came about because we were looking for an exciting personality to endorse a motorbike game. Eddie is the world record holder for motorbike jumps, and we approached him, signed a licensing deal and then developed the game with his help."

Brian Jacks' Superstar Challenge was Martech's Decathlon-type game, followed by a rather different athletic game — the icon driven *Geoff Capes Strongman. Zoids*, the computer game was born one Saturday afternoon, in the front room of the Martin household. David had come back from a shopping expedition, having bought some toys and was on the carpet with his youngsters assembling and playing with a couple of Zoids. "They were great — on the Monday I got in touch with Tomy who make Zoids, and eventually a deal was tied up." The Electronic Pencil Company were hired to produce the game.

Martech's way of working has evolved into a team-based approach to writing games. So far, all the games released by Martech have been in-house projects: "We're more interested in overseeing the development of the whole concept, from the original lightbulb of an idea in someone's head to the shelves of High Street stores. We've never marketing anything sent to us - but we've found some very good programmers that way!"

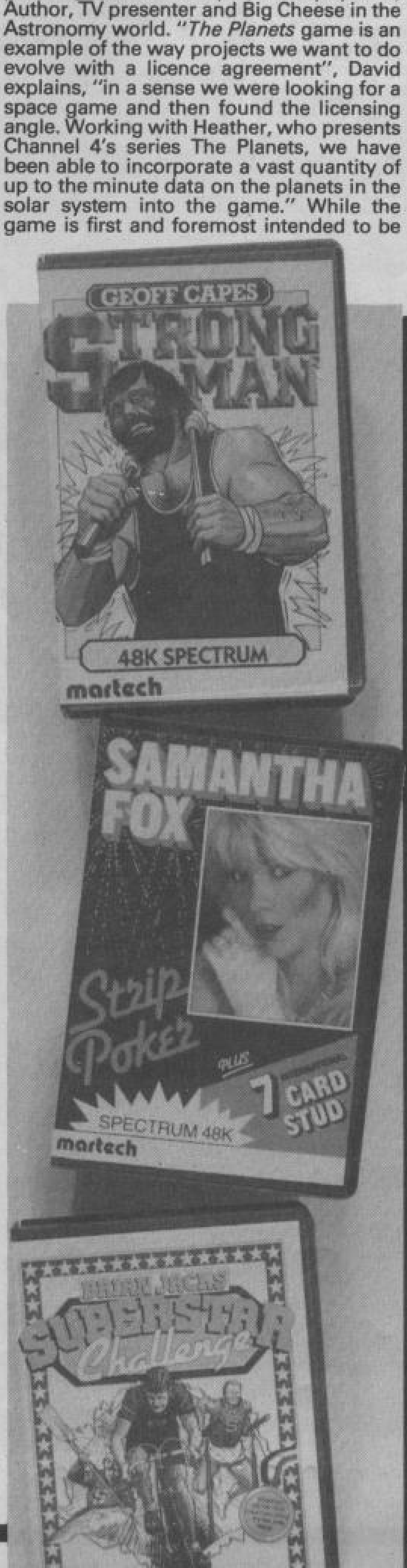
David Martin feels that the days when one programmer can produce an entire game from start to finish are over. Sure, there will still be room for a few Mike Oldfields in the software industry - people to design the game, implement the graphics, write the code and provide copy for the inlay. But people like Steve Crow (of *Starquake* fame, amongst other things) are very rare indeed. Most software houses need to pull in specialists to take care of the different aspects of writing a program. "We're putting a lot more effort into our games nowadays", David says, "we partition the task and use specialists who work together on a project in a team."

Martech employs full-time programmers, preferring not to rely on freelances. At present there are two teams of half a dozen or so programmers, one group based in Brighton and the other working in Portsmouth. A third team is being set up in order to cope with the schedule planned releases — Martech has decided to release programs two at a time, rather than singly, and ten games are planned for 1986.

Martech's administrative offices are located in Pevensey Bay, (above John's Legal Practice — very handy having a solicitor downstairs!) — fairly centrally as far as the programming teams are concerned. While most of the work is done at programmers' homes, teams meet up in the main office from time to time to bounce ideas around, show David how things are going and talk code and routines as programmers invariably do.

Three members of the Brighton team were at Martech HQ on the day of the CRASH visit: programmers Ian McArdle and John Wilson and graphics man, Malcolm Smith. Ian has been with Martech since David gave up programming and has worked on a variety of projects; John Wilson's pedigree includes the contract for Century's *Their Finest Hour* and the Spectrum conversion of *Geoff Capes Strongman*. Malcolm has been on the Martech staff for about a year now, coming from Brighton Art College to design screen graphics as required by programmers. His credit list includes work on the Amstrad versions of *Brian Jacks* and *Zoids* as well as *Geoff Capes* and *The Planets* for the Spectrum and Amstrad. Oh, and he was the man who digitised Samantha Fox's charms for the Spectrum screen . . .

The Brighton team are putting the finishing touches to *The Planets*, a game based on accurate data on the solar system supplied by Heather Couper, Astrophysicist, Author, TV presenter and Big Cheese in the Astronomy world. "*The Planets* game is an example of the way projects we want to do evolve with a licence agreement", David explains, "in a sense we were looking for a space game and then found the licensing angle. Working with Heather, who presents Channel 4's series The Planets, we have been able to incorporate a vast quantity of up to the minute data on the planets in the solar system into the game." While the game is first and foremost intended to be fun, the wealth of information it contains means that some of it is bound to rub off on the player, who should end up with a greater knowledge of the planetary system in which we live. Education the fun way . . .



The story behind the development of *The Planets* provides a fairly typical example of the evolution of a Martech game. David Martin is the main ideas man in the company: "Ideas for the next game are constantly in your mind - some are dismissed while others are modified. Gradually a an outline skeleton of a game concept passes more and more hurdles until it finally comes together as a concept. We don't tend to do much formally — most games evolve in the writing. We don't sit down and come up with a definitive storyboard and they say to the programming team 'implement that'."

The scenario for *The Planets* evolved over three months or more. Starting with the basic idea of doing a space game, Martech approached Heather Couper and secured her involvement in the project. Malcolm began studying Heather's book, The Planets, as well as NASA photographs and the graphics for the game took shape, based on the book, TV series — and imagination! One of the Portsmouth programming team had written the basis of a rather strange but very compelling 43-level puzzle/strategy game. This game was modified a little and incorporated in the scenario of *The Planets* as *The Alien Game*, which has to be played in order to obtain clues useful during the interplanetary section of the main game.

The Planets will be Martech's third release this year. Martech's 1986 began with *Zoids*, and continued with *Sam Fox Strip Poker*. The *Sam Fox* game has already cause a bit of a storm in a D Cup: one computer magazine refused to carry Martech's advertising and, while asking for a review copy, stated that they would only review the B side of the tape where a four-handed fully clothed Stud Poker game resides. The poker game behind *Sam Fox* is a very nifty piece of programming, and had been on Martech's shelves for a while before the tie-in with Samantha Fox was mooted. "The Sam Fox element is not to be taken seriously", David explains, "it's just meant as a bit of fun. When you play poker for real, you play for money but that's a bit difficult with a computer. The Sam Fox tie-in gives an incentive, if you like, adding that bit of adrenalin to the game. Naturally the licence will help us to sell the program, and so far the order levels are very respectable."

Sexist or not, at least Sam Fox's digitised form makes a change from the usual run of Gore and Violence. A star character taking off a few items of clothing seems less harmful to this reviewer, than the mindless violence perpetrated by such dudes as Jason in *Friday 13th* and Rambo in his jungle game.

Martech's history is one of steady and cautious growth — each subsequent release builds upon a solid base as the company expands. While the programmers concentrate on the three main machines, Spectrum, Amstrad and Commodore, all Martech's games are converted for the Acorn computers and MSX, giving their products a long shelf life overall.

David Martin is pleased with the way things are going for his company at the moment — and there is little doubt that the quality of Martech releases is steadily improving. If anything, *Zoids* was **too** good! Some interesting projects are in the pipeline from Martech, but it's a little to early to reveal details as yet.

Martech has been around for a long time, and look set to be around a lot longer: "We're working towards producing better and better software," David says, "we do like games for their own sake. The games market, not just on computers, has always been in existence, and as long as there are computers in homes we intend to continue writing games for them."

And no doubt, they will.

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IN THE TURBO ESPRIT COMP!

Sadly your Comps Minion can't afford a car — it's a case of walking to work, up hill and down dale to clock on in the Comps Dept every morning. It's not quite the same, stumping down Ludlow High Street early in the morning going "Broom Broom" while the local Boy Racers zoom past in their M Reg Ford Escorts with big headlamps and foam rubber covered roll bars. Little do they know I'm not pretending to be a car while they are pretending to be Jackie Stewart or Alain Prost.

Oh no, "Broom Broom" is not an imitation of the noise an overhead cam engine makes. It's an incantation to the Bristly God in whose cupboard I plan to spend as much of the day as possible, a personalised chant guaranteed to help keep nasty Newsfield bosses away from my lair.

Doesn't always work though . .

Alright, leggo, ouch. I'll tell them about the Durell Comp. I'll do it now — just let me borrow Lloyd's Hermes. Yes. Okay, right now.

40 Durell games for the runners up!

Crash Competition

Good ol' Durell Software have offered to buy the winner of this comp a car of his or her very own. A Porsche 911 no less.

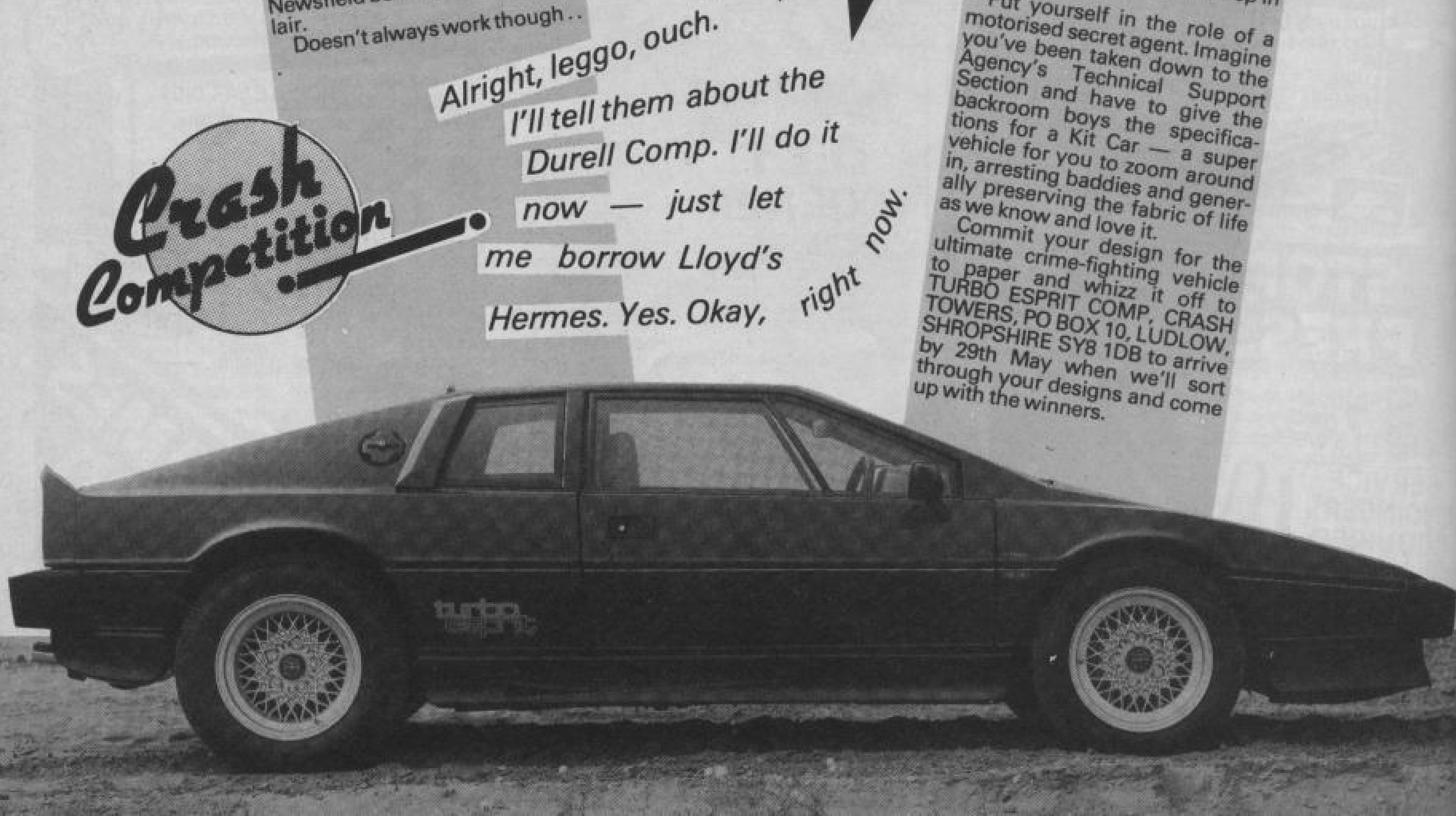
Durell's Tea Kitty is no larger than ours at Chateau CRASH, though, so they've all decided to make do with One Sugar for the rest of the year and spend lots of loot on a radio controlled model. (It'd be no sugar, milk, tea, coffee, or biccies until 2003 if they bought a real, full sized Porsche — and you wouldn't want one of your favourite games programming teams to work without refreshment for seventeen years, now would you?)

Ten runners up will each be given a copy of *Combat Lynx*, *Turbo Esprit*, *Saboteur*, and *Critical Mass* which should lead to hours of fun.

Turbo Esprit is a fast action driving game in which you zoom round the streets of a city attempting to thwart an evil gang of drug dealers. You're behind the wheel of a super fast motor — a Turbo Esprit, no less — capable of doing 150mph and fitted with a neat set of machine guns for rubbing out the opposition. You've also got a computerise mapping system which can be pulled down onto a head up display system and a communications console which allows your controller to keep in touch.

Put yourself in the role of a motorised secret agent. Imagine you've been taken down to the Agency's Technical Support Section and have to give the backroom boys the specifications for a Kit Car — a super vehicle for you to zoom around in, arresting baddies and generally preserving the fabric of life as we know and love it.

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Back to Skool
oops
Dragged back for another term, Eric continues his one-man fight against the Education system. All his old adversaries are there, plus escapees from the Biology room and, even worse, girls! Lucky he stocked up on stink bombs over the holidays!
Back to Skool (48K Spectrum) — £6.95
Skooldaze (48K Spectrum & CBM64) — £6.95
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organization, SAROS, gather their slender
resources into one last daring and foolhardy
mission to strike at the heart of the invaders'
home planet.
YOU are their last hope. Equipped with a forbidden
laser sword, your mission is to seek out the under-
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need to destroy the enemy. But time is running out and only
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AN INCENTIVE TO CREATE ADVENTURES

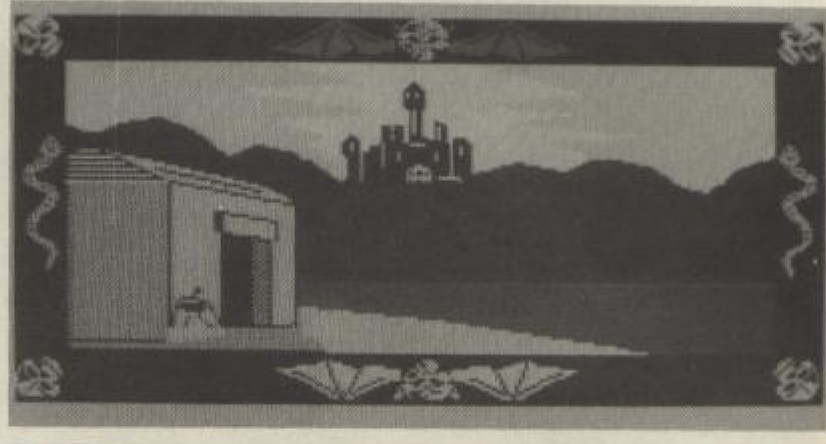
Ever wanted to create your own adventure game with text or text and graphics? Machine code a bit beyond you ? *Quill*, *Illustrator* and *Patch* fans have been producing some very respectable games, but very soon there will be another utility that takes the coding out of adventure program writing leaving you free to concentrate on writing the plot and devising problems.

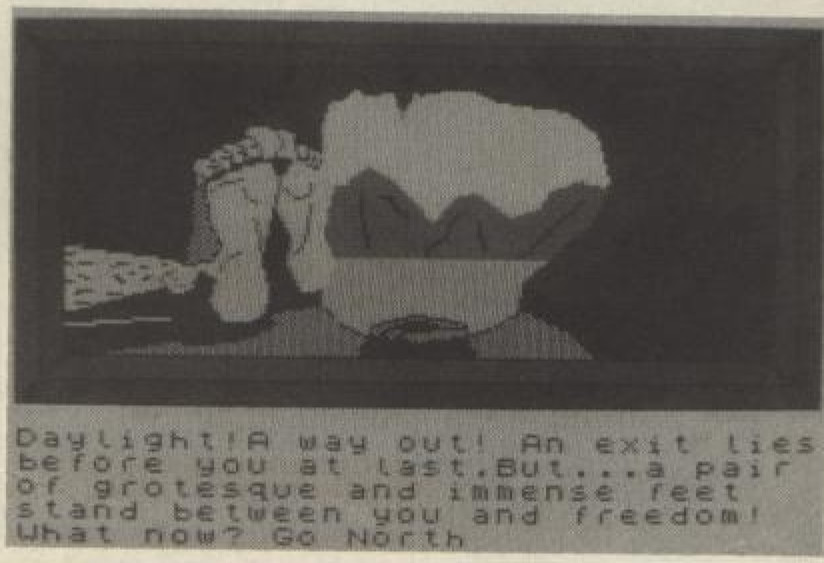
Incentive Software are about to release a Spectrum version of *Graphic Adventure Creator*, which has already won acclaim on the Amstrad. The final version is currently undergoing rigourous bug testing and should be in the shops shortly.

On loading, the program presents you with the obligatory main menu, from whence all the facilities may be accessed. The first department to peruse is the graphics creator which has a menu of its own beneath the graphics area. Rectangles and elipses can be made with simple commands and can be as large as the graphics area itself. As you draw, creating illustrations for your adventure masterpiece, the computer remembers each step allowing you to scan through the various stages of your artistic creation.

When you have finished drawing the outline, colour may be added to areas of the screen using the fill option, which permits solid colour or shading to be used. Some very sophisticated graphics can be prepared to illustrate locations in your adventure scenario — as the demo screens provide by Incentive reveal.

Text handling is the most crucial part of any adventure system and is probably the strongest part of *GAC*. The vocabulary handling section is split into three distinct areas: nouns; verbs and adverbs. Each division can contain quite a substantial vocabulary — it's up to your ingenuity to ensure that nonsense input is trapped and intelligent responses are given to the commands that adventurers input to the final program! Messages are easy to use but it's a good idea to keep them brief to save valuable memory space.





A selection of dummy adventure screens created by Incentive to illustrate the capabilities of GRAPHIC ADVENTURE CREATOR

Finally *GAC* has a sophisticated system for testing conditions — thus you can make sure that adventurers exploring your scenario can't breathe when there's no air and so on. Obviously locations, their contents and links between areas in the scenario can all be defined — which is where your skill as a dungeon designer or whatever can be given full rein.

As soon as a finished version of *GAC* arrives in the office we'll get on with writing an adventure — or at least a full review! The package, which comes with a comprehensive manual, should be available soon, selling for £22.95 and being compatible with both the 48 and 128K Spectrum.

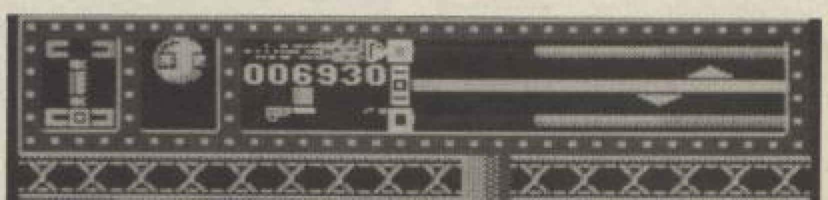
CLEARING UP CONTAMINATION

Mikro-Gen's latest game takes place on, or rather in a giant asteroid called *Equinox*. Almost completely hollowed out by mining operations, Equinox has accidentally become contaminated by radio-active storage canisters which must be rendered harmless before the human mining staff can resume their lucrative search for rare and valuable minerals.

The only way to make the asteroid safe for human habitation is to remove the canisters and drop them down a chute into a special lead-lined room. This cleaning up task is the responsibility of a dedicated disposal droid under your control, called Gadgi. Naturally, the job is nowhere near as simple as it sounds — the game is a race against the clock, for if the canisters are left alone for too long, the radioactive material they contain goes critical. BANG! End of game, Gadgi and most of Equinox.

The playing area is split into eight levels, each containing a single canister. Gadgi has to survive a complete mini adventure on each level before the canister can be collected. Interlevel travel can only be achieved by means of trans-level teleporters activated by an appropriately numbered level pass which has to be found. Nor is Gadgi left to his own devices — a whole variety of hostile nasties live in the mine caves and do their very best to hinder the clean-minded little droid in its endeavours.

Equinox is due to sell for £7.95 and is nearly complete, the Mikro-Gen team assure us . . .



Strange artefacts inside the hollow asteroid, EQUINOX. Gadgi is the little round ball perilously close to the crushing mechanism in the centre of the screen

CAN YOU BEAT MIKE SINGLETON?



The Title Screen from the game which forms part of Mike Singleton's latest software project. He's calling the enterprise MAELSTROM and DARK SCEPTRE is the first game . . . . That whirly spiral is animated, and most hypnotic it is too.

After quite a lull on the Spectrum scene, adventure and strategy guru, Mike Singleton is soon set to return with *The Dark Sceptre*. Currently in production at this very minute, Mike's latest is of an adventure type game, front ended with all the skill and finesse of his previous productions. The story runs as follows:

The action revolves around an ancient and indestructable object by the name of the Dark Sceptre and takes place in the Isles of the Western Sea. As in all good stories, there are goodies and baddies: this time the embodiment of evil manifests itself as the Shadow Lords. This nasty breed of beings is quite powerful when the game begins, but should the Dark Sceptre come within their grasp the resulting havoc would be major. You, and a bunch of other computer controlled chaps, make up the forces of good that endeavours to gain control of the central artefact and maintain peace on the Isles of the Western Sea. Through a combination of cunning and skill it is up to the player with his party of helpers to control the Dark Sceptre, thus keeping the Shady Nasties under control.

You are in command of a company of different characters, drawn from a variety of races. Each member of your team has unique skills, genetically inherited. Some are explorers, others are magicians while negotiation, combat and command skills are not spread evenly . . .

Two versions of the game are in the pipeline — a stand alone game, to be marketed by Beyond, and a play by mail version in which players use Microdrive cartridges to record their moves each turn. Mike Singleton will play the role of the Shadow Lords — he's the Game Moderator — and each player's aim is to seize the Dark Sceptre itself.

The Microdriven Play by Mail version of the game will permit players to access two modes of display: replay and simulation. Replay allows the player to select a character and watch events that have happened in the Play by Mail game since his last turn while Simulation allows events that might happen in the game as a consequence of orders given by the player to his company of warriors.

If a player succeeds in getting hold of the Dark Sceptre in the Play by Mail game, then all the other players and the Shadow Lords will attempt to kill him — being King of the Castle may well prove to be short-lived indeed!

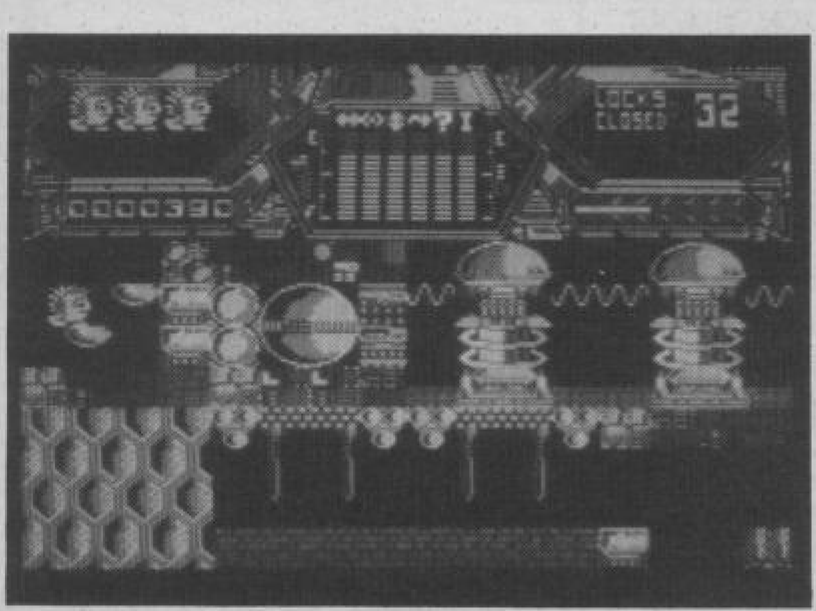
During a turn, each player can give instructions to the band of beings under his control, which can consist of six to a dozen major characters, each of whom is capable of receiving orders and acting independently. Followers may also be recruited, but being beings of less power they can only tag along with the major characters helping out as best they can rather than acting on their own.

It's very early days yet for Dark Sceptre — a mid-summer launch is planned, and we'll keep you posted. Let's face it, it's not every day that you have the chance to take on Mike Singleton playing one of his own games . . . .

A super giant-sized character stumps around the shop in a demo sequence taken from DARK SCEPTRE



MERELY MANGRAM MERELY M



Just one of the 1,024 locations lurking in Paul Hargreaves' latest game for Quicksilva, TANTALUS

Ho hum. The vegetation in my garden seems to have realised it's Spring again and is leaping out of the ground to greet the alternating showers and sunlight that typifies a traditional Ludlow Springtime. The sap, like the grass, is rising wherever I look. Soon it'll be time to take the trusty pushalong lawnmower out of its winter coat of grease and press it into service before the local Village Beautiful Committee starts sending members round to complain about the 'natural' state of my cottage garden. Chores, chores, chores . . .

Easter has come and gone now, bringing a crop of new releases to the games market but we're still waiting patiently for some 'Easter' games with nary a squeak from the companies who promised them. Apart from the long standing waits, like *Street Hawk* and *Knight Rider* which are nearing legendary status as the date they were first advertised disappears into the mists of time, a whole bunch of long-promised games still haven't struggled over the horizon.

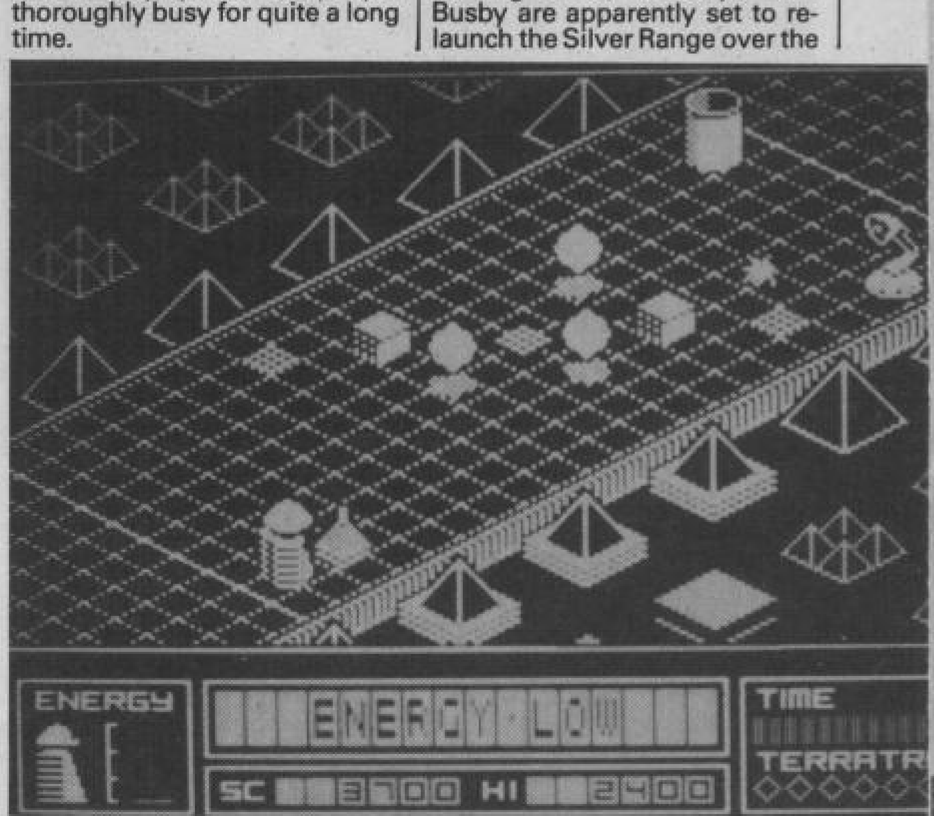
Cyberun has shown up, but where's *Pentagram*? What of the other games we were promised during the month of March like *Tujad* and *The Young Ones* from Orpheus or *Rock N Wrestle* from Melbourne House? *Goonies, Amazon Women*, and *Return to Oz* are still bolted inside the US Gold Stable while there's no sign of *Rescue on Fractalus* from Activision, *I.C.U.P.S* from Odin or *Halley's Comet* and *Empire* promised by Firebird — have their wings been clipped? The litany continues: whatever happened to the "Early January 1986" release of Ocean's *Hunchback, The Adventure*? *Dr Who*, first advertised in the Christmas Special, has still not turned up for the Spectrum (although the Tardis has made it's way inside the Commodore in ZZAP! Towers). *Superbowl*, at least arrived for review, rapidly followed by a plea to ignore it, because it was bug-ridden. *Super-MAN* isn't and probably never will be in the shops. On the cancellation front, late news reaches my desk that Microsphere's planned Easter release, *Contact Sam Cruise* has been abandoned, too.

On a more positive front, *Heavy on the Magick* from Gargoyle Games, previewed last issue, is coming along very nicely and should be somewhere near the shops by the time you read this, if not actually in them. Down the road and around the corner and along another longish road or two from Gargoyle's Dudley HQ, Elite Systems can be found, where work is proceeding apace on Spectrum versions of the arcade classics *Ghosts and Goblins* and *Paperboy*. Steve Wilcox assures us that *Paperboy* is all but finished on the Spectrum, but no release dates have been set for either game. More details next issue.

As I write this, a finished copy of *Knight Tyme* from Mastertronic is due in the office any day now, and the delectable Alison Beasley has promised to send copies of *Delta Wing* (a re-release of a Creative Sparks game) on the MAD Chrome label for £2.99 as well as *Sport of Kings*, another £2.99 MAD game and *Ticket to Ride*, a £1.99 release. Master T are obviously keeping themselves busy.

The Argus Press Software group sent Graeme a giant size Easter Egg — just my luck to arrive in the office half an hour after Kean the Gannet had demolished most of it and disappeared back up to the artroom. News of *The Force*, a Mind Games release in which the player takes on the role of a superintendant of police for a year was included with the egg, but no release date has been fixed for the Spectrum version, it seems. Argus are also taking care of the marketing side of things for A'N'F whose £8.95 game *Core* arrived just too late for inclusion in this issue. *Core* marks a fair departure from the *Chuckie Egg* games, and is a 1,000 location icon-driven arcade adventure in which you have to explore a deserted mining complex, searching for the components of a computer that will reveal how all the humans who once worked the mines met their deaths.

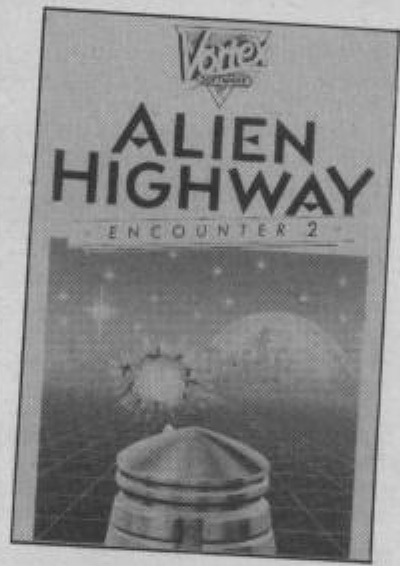
Details of another Quicksilva game by the author of *Glass* also arrived with the eggie: Paul Hargreaves has just finished writing *Tantalus*, in which you have to guide a genetically engineered warrior by the name of Spike to the centre of a fortress on Tantalus IV. The game features 1,024 screens, 48 varieties of meanie, and hazards to avoid include sequence lasers, wave lasers, vats of bubbling acid, ceiling mounted grabbers which pluck the unwary towards an early grave as well as deadly doors in dissolving walls. Thirty two locked doors have to be opened before your quest to assassinate the enemy at the centre of the fortress can be completed, and thirty two keys have to be located and used appropriately. For £8.95 it should keep quite a few people thoroughly busy for quite a long time.



Energy is running low in ALIEN HIGHWAY, the follow up to HIGHWAY ENCOUNTER from Vortex. Better find a regeneration unit pretty quickly!

Alien Highway, Vortex's follow up to *Highway Encounter* has just landed on my desk. Bear with me while I load it up and have a go . . .

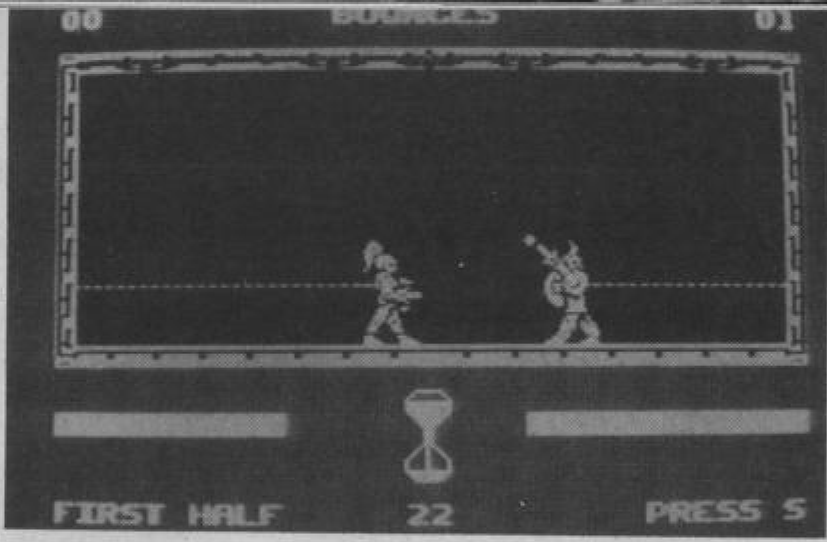
. . . Hmm, a worthy sequel. Keeping to the same basic scenario, Vortex have tweaked the game quite a bit. The kerb is electrified on the new roadway, there are homing mutants to cope with as well as balls that bounce DOWN the road as well as across. The graphics have been changed quite a bit and this time five lives don't travel along the highway with you — extra lives can only be gained by visiting a regeneration unit. For £7.95 you get a game that is different enough to warrant buying if *Highway Encounter* is already in your software collection. Nice one.



Despite the non-arrival of Firebird games promised for review, (still no *I.C.C.U.P.S.* or finished *Comet Game* Mr Pratt — are you reading this?), the boys from Busby are apparently set to relaunch the Silver Range over the coming eight weeks or so. Expect to see (one day, anyway) the sequel to *Subsunk*, *Seabase Delta* as well as a game starring Spiky Harold, a hedgehog in hibernation searching for tasty morsels. A couple of martial arts games *Kai Temple* and *Ninja Master* are also on the Firebird schedule, but a bit further down the list, timewise.

After a large number of false starts, Dr Tim Langdell of The Edge and Softek finally paid his long-promised visit to Ludlow a little while ago, I hear. The Good Doctor is still enthusing about his whizzo new Spectrum word-

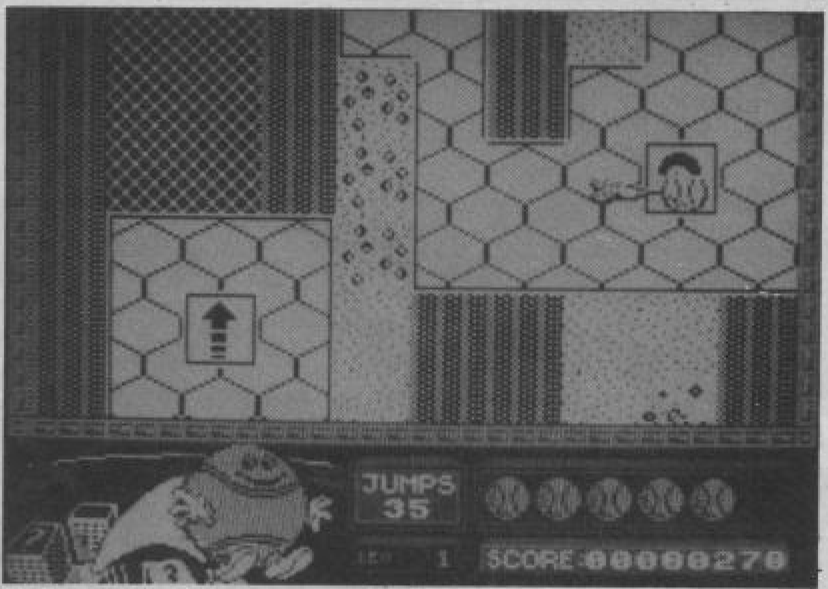
IA LY MANGRAM



High Tech Arena Ballgame: That's BOUNCES from Beyond, programmed by Denton Designs and due out any day now

processor *The Word* which is capable of interfacing with *The Artist*, and mentioned *Fairlight II* and *The Artist II* in a very similar, if not quite the same, breath. Still due for imminent release, we hear.

·· Beyond are set to release *Bounces* on the Spectrum, promised before Christmas. I've just seen the game running on a Spectrum and it all looks quite jolly. You're pitted in head to head combat in an enclosed arena. Rather than impale your opponent on a sharp object, the aim of the game is to tire him out or knock him down with well placed shots of the ball that rockets around inside the playing area. £9.95, and on its way to the shops, right now, *Bounces* is booked for a full review next issue.



In the middle of the screen, on the right hand side, your first ball is just bursting. That's life, or rather the end of one, in BOUNDER, from Gremlin Graphics

Gremlin Graphics have finished work on their bouncing ball game, *Bounder* in which you have to direct a bouncing tennis ball along a hazardous course of obstacles and paving stones which scrolls down the screen. A few minutes play on the pre-production copy had me hooked — should do well.

V has arrived in the Mail Order department, Auntie Aggie informs me. Sadly, she wouldn't let me borrow a copy of the game to play, standing over Cameron while he photographed it, she scampered back to her office insisting that she had a queue of customers waiting. Once you've assumed the role of Michael Donovan, leader of Earth's resistance movement, the game requires you to penetrate the lizardy aliens' space craft and destroy it by placing bombs in strategic positions. Red Dust is available to slow the scaly ones down a bit, but more than that I could not glean from Cameron! Once again, full review next issue.

Running along the top corridor of the evil lizardy aliens's ship, it's up to you to rid the Earth of the scaly horrors. V from Ocean





MacMillan Software are re-releasing *Popeye*, the Dk'tronics game which won a Smash a little while ago. Repackaged in a pretty new inlay, the game's the same — peruse the review if you want to check it out.

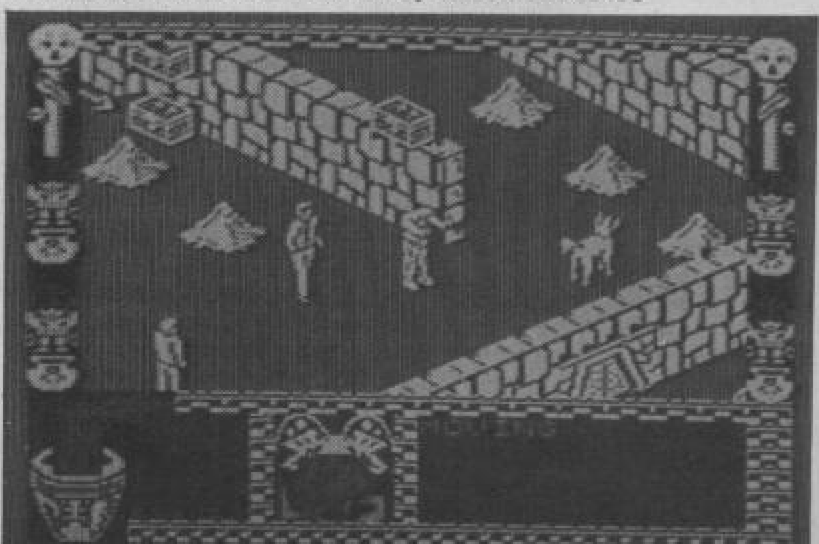
Hewsons have sent a very classy invitation to our corpulent editor, inviting him to lunch at the Waldorf in London. No doubt our cultured leader will stump off to meet Steve Turner et al wearing his shiny Doctor Marten boots and report back fully next month. Also from the Hewson stable, *Pyracurse* is well on target for its end-of-June launch date. Described as a '3D scrolling adventure movie', *Pyracurse* is seen by all at Hewsons as a leap forward from the 3D graphics standard established in *Avalon* and *Dragontorc* by the ubiquitous Steve Turner.

On the adventuring front, the next game in the Scott Adams Questprobe series has just been finished, and is winging its way towards deepest Derekland. Featuring The Human Torch and The Thing, Marvel Comic heroes both, the game requires you to control the duo on their mission to save Alicia Masters from the clutches of the evil Doctor Doom. Should prove almost as easy as rescuing an uneaten sandwich from the jaws of Gary Liddon!

Mosaic are promising further interactive fiction titles along the lines of *Secret Diary of Adrian Mole*, and roundabout Autumn time *The Growing Pains of Adrian Mole* as well as *The Archers* should make their appearance. Once again, Level 9 are doing the programming. *The Snow Queen* in her final form will also be marketed by Mosaic on behalf of St Bride's: 'early summer' appears on the launch schedule for that one, while Ram Jam's *The Story of the Amulet* is due for a Mosaic release in the 'summer'. At least one company in the software industry sets release dates that are suitably vague!

Last, but not least, Derek has a copy of another Ram Jam Corporation adventure game travelling up to see him: *Terrors of Trantoss*, due for mid April(ish) launch by Ariolasoft. Apparently a very nasty member of the undead, by the name of Trantoss, is terrorising a small village in the region of Hapshal, south of the Dark Mountains of Mortran. The nasty Mr T derives his powers from a golden mace that was broken into pieces and scattered by a group of kindly wizards. If he collects the bits up before you do, there's going to be big trouble . . .

Legless O'Donnell comes up against a headless tomb guardian in Hewsons PYRACURSE. The way some folks round here behave, you'd think they were headless too





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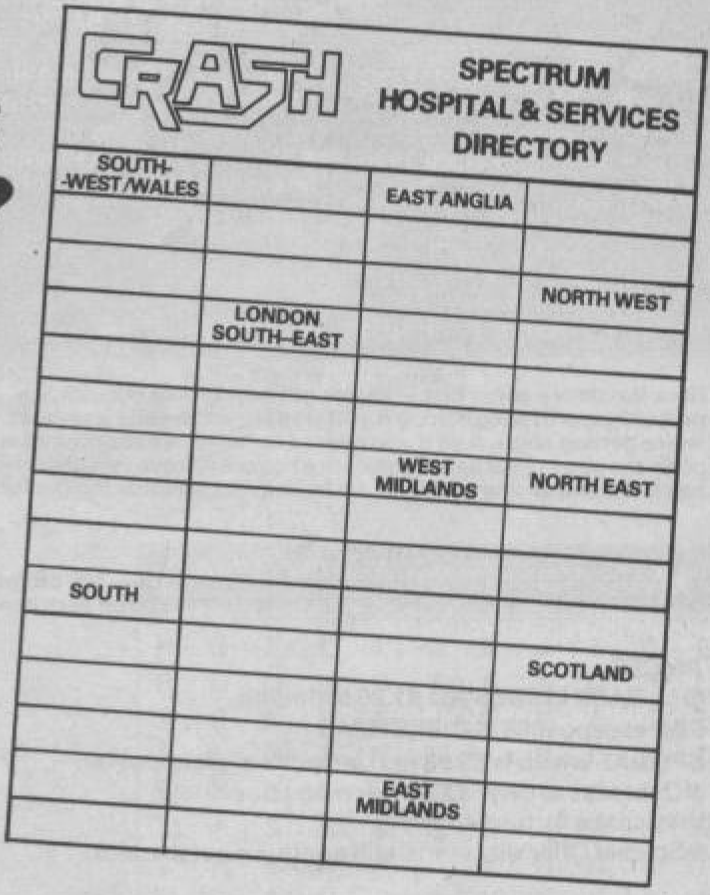
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CRASH BACK NUMBERS

ZX SPECTRUM

fill that CRASH Gap.....

3 April 84	● 'Missile Command' games ● Living Guide ● Sinclair Talks ● Code Name Mat
4 May 84	● The Quill utility ● Graphics utilities ● Microdrive ● 'Pengo' games ● Living Guide
10 November 84	● Battlefield Joystick — comparisons ● Deus Ex Machina
17 June 85	● Denton Designs ● Frankie ● Spectrum surgery ● Sinclair Story 3 ● Knight Lore Map 1 ● Underwurlde Map 2 ● Tape to Microdrive ● Leonardo graphics utility ● Datel sound sampler ● Artist: David Thorpe
18 July 1985	●Gremlin Graphics profile●Artist Bob Wakelin●Sinclair TV●Tape Magazines●Leonardo utility part two●CRASHBACK looks again at games in Issue 8●Gyron map of Atrium●Modems round-up ●And the cover that had the Jehova's Jumping!
19 August 1985	*WITHOUT PAGES 123, 124, 125 and 126. WITH:* ●CRL Profile●Pull out Oliposter — Fighting Spectrum●Mirrorsoft Profile●Inside the Timex 2068●Round Up of BASIC Compilers●On the Cover Artist Rich Shenfield●Maps of Dynamite Dan and Shadowfire
20 September 1985	●ALIEN 8 and DUN DARACH maps●Electronic Pencil Company Profile●Part Two of BASIC Compilers Round-up●The 64K Spectrum●Design Design Autoprofile, Part 1●Rod Cousens interview
Issue 21 October 1985	●Previews of Marsport, Astroclone, Elite and Scooby Doo ●NODES OF YESOD map ●Holografix profile — how to make a Hologram ●Crashtionnaire analysis ●Platinum Productions profile
22 November 1985	●Feature on small computer magazines — looking at the opposition●Microdrive tips and hints in the NICHE and part 2 of the fast storage feature●Susan Rowe is On The Cover●An inside look at Fantasy Gamebooks●Early looks at Robot Messiah, Tau Ceti and Zoids
23 December 1985	●Visit to Melbourne House●Minson goes Surfing●The Design Design autoprofile ends● Computer graphics feature — On The Cover is Dave Beeson from Central TV●Scary cover and Scary Preview of Friday 13th●More previews, comps and tips
Christmas Special 1985/6	On The Cover Special — our very own Oliver Frey occupies five pages●Profile of the Gargoyle Games crew●Lloyd's Lookback, 1985 revisited●Hewson Consultants under Roger Kean's Eagle Eye●Short story●Plus a host of Festive Fun and Frolics
25 February 1986	●Durell — the profile●A chat with the Microsphere team●Double dose of Jetman●Gremlin Graphics bring a Ninja to the Spectrum●TECH NICHE looks at a FORTH add-on and examines extensions to ZX BASIC
26 March 1986	●ST BRIDE's Profile●A first look at the Spectrum 128●Micronet 800●Romantic Robot's Multiface One under scrutiny●Diary of 2186●Preview of Max Headroom the game
27 April 1986	●Massive 23 page Playing Tips Supplement● 1985 Readers Awards results●Mel Croucher interview●Imagine profile●Round up of 128K games●A visit to the first Play By Mail convention

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BACK NUMBERS
CRASH MAGAZINE, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW
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A Second Chance to win a 128K Spectrum for Free! CRASH Hats and T Shirts up for grabs, too!



WIN A 128 PART II!

Test your Sinclair Product Knowledge and win the latest Sinclair Goodie — a 128K Spectrum

AARGH! France has come on holiday to me this year! Okay Jacques, that'll do. I'll carry on from here — you take the onions and have a kip in the broom cupboard.

Ho hum. These Minion exchange visits sponsored by the EEC don't half cause problems. They're supposed to be a way of fostering international co-operation, but if you ask THIS Minion, the whole scheme is a cunning plot on behalf of the French Government which wants to reduce its Minion Mountain. He's a nice bloke, Jacques, but a bit too keen really. Caught him cycling round Ludlow the other day in his beret and stripy jumper handing out competition entry forms to passers by — I mean, as if I don't have enough entries to cope with as it is!

Anyway "My little Cabbages", in case you weren't a lucky winner in last issue's 128K comp, here's another chance to win the computer of your dreamipoos. It's 128 Wordsquare Time, folks . . .

This time you have to dig out various words and product names associated with Sinclair Research. The words may be written separately: 'Mini Telly' or joined together: 'Minitelly'. Once you think you've found them all, simply ring them with a biro and whiz your entry off to MAY 128 COMPETITION, CRASH TOWERS PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB, making sure it arrives before 29th May. Five lucky runners up will win a CRASH Hat and T Shirt set, too. So make sure you put your shirt size on the entry form my little darlings.

The words you need to find are CALCULATOR, SPECTRUM, MINI TELLY, QUANTUM LEAP, LCD WATCH, ELECTRIC CAR.

Easy huh? Well, there's another Sinclairy word hidden away in the square. (A close read of the Sinclair Story from yur CRASH Library might help!) When you think you've found it, circle it round in the usual manner but please remember to write the mystery word on the back of your entry envelope to make your Minion's life easier. There's nice fellows and fellowesses.

And see that pretty coupon? Yea, that's it — the one over there with 128K COMP III written on it. Save that coupon folks, cos you'll need it to enter the final 128K competition next munf. Remember, no coupon, no entry in the June competition — so make sure the dog doesn't get to chew your copy of CRASH this month if you want another go at winning your very own 128K Spectrum.

Eh! Jacques! Allons au Drainpipe et Ferret pour boire?

128K
COMP III

Crash Competition

SINCLAIR WORDSEARCH

H	G	F	L	P	Q	B	J	Z	O	E	L	N
B	C	O	H	C	T	A	W	D	C	L	K	A
E	C	A	B	E	J	O	R	B	J	E	B	S
T	L	A	T	N	W	A	V	C	R	C	N	K
E	Y	E	L	H	O	N	I	F	E	T	F	Z
L	I	S	X	C	Q	R	A	H	I	R	S	R
L	F	E	B	P	U	T	O	N	S	I	N	I
Y	R	A	N	J	A	L	F	E	F	C	B	A
M	I	N	I	M	N	B	A	W	J	C	J	L
I	S	A	I	H	T	H	R	T	O	A	O	C
P	E	C	B	A	U	I	X	S	O	R	H	N
T	R	A	H	F	M	L	E	A	P	R	W	I
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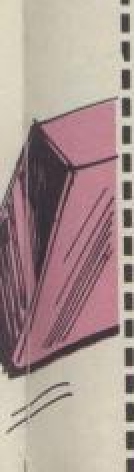
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MOVIE

Imagine's 3D game has brought these tips from Paul Collins **of Tamworth. Perhaps there will be a map next month if Art can get round to drawing one.**
Go and pick up the brief case, gun, money. Remember to use the bullets carefully because you only have a limited supply of these. Then go and find a woman. Say to her 'Friend or Foe'. If she replies 'Kill, kill, kill' then she is the baddy. If she repeats 'Friend or Foe' then she is the goody. Follow her and do as she says but make sure she doesn't get killed. If she does then you're on your own.

I hope you all liked last months playing tips special, it took a lot of time and effort to get it together. Sadly even after all the double checking a few errors did creep through. A few months back I published a listing for Wheelie **— to get this to work change the checksum number of 5024 to 4514 and all should go well. Some people seem to be experiencing problems with the Sweevo's World Editor in the Tips Supplement: there are no printing mistakes in that listing, so keep persevering. Don't forget, if you don't fancy typing in all those programs you can always buy the tape.**
Some of the other programs featured last month won't work on the Spectrum 128K because of the change in ROM, and to get those listings working all the checksum lines need to be removed. To my knowledge those seem to be the only errors to date, but if you find any others send me a SAE and I'll see what I can do.
Current games for which I would like tips on are Way of the Tiger, Starstrike II **(which is an excellent game),** Cyberun, Green Beret **and** Sai Combat. **And with that said, onto this month's dosage of hints and tips.**

SABOTEUR

The *Saboteur* **tips printed some months back had a slight error in them, but thanks to** Andrew Turner **of West Wickham the correct version can now be printed**
Right, right, right, right, right, right, (ladder on the right) down, right, up, right, (ladder on the left) down, down, down, left, left, (into tube 1) left, left, left, left, down, right, down, down, down, right, down, left, (into tube 2) left, up, up, up, (split level) up, up, up, up, right, right, right, down, right, up, (collect bomb) down, left, up, left, left, left, left, down, right, right, right, (swop bomb for disc in terminal) left, left, down, (split level) down, down, down, down, right, (into tube 2) right, up, left, up, up, up, left, up, up, right, right, right, right, (into tube 1) right, right, up, up, up, left, up, (using the ladder on the left) left, (ladder on the left), up, up, right, right, up, up, up, (jump left over pool) left, up, left, left, up, up halfway then move on to the platform, jump on to the second platform, walk right, drop down, jump right twice, up ladder, left and into the helicopter

SWORDS AND SORCERY

Many readers including John Hartness **of Cleveland have sent in these tips for PSS' epic game. If anyone has got additional information then send it in.**
The Masters:
Yama — *gives you extra lives*
Bog — *improves your sword fighting abilities*
Scrag — *improves your spear fighting abilities*
Grol — *improves your staff fighting abilities*
Iva Veston — *gives you the ability to carry more and do more damage to your enemies*
Villa — *improves your thieving skills such as picking locks*
Jack — *improves your jumping abilities*
Greaves — *makes the monsters a bit friendlier towards you*
Iscath — *improves your unarmed combat abilities*
Verna — *lessens your battle damage and gives you greater hitting power*
Merlock — *gives you more spells and improves your magic capabilities*
Hubris — *improves your ability to sense traps*

1) The magic staff is in a room in quadrant 1 on the right hand side and two rooms up. If you are mostly a non-magic person then don't bother using it.
2) The magic sword is in quadrant 2, 2 rooms down and then 2 rooms from the left
3) The pieces of Zob's armour on level 1 are: 2 Sabatons and 2 greaves.
4) All the monsters that grunt can be bribed with food
5) Some of the monsters, such as the magic user in the Old Time Hall, cannot be killed by normal weapons or fireball spells
6) It is a good idea to threaten a monster a few times before commanding it to surrender
7) It takes roughly five pieces of gold to bribe a monster. Once it has been given the required amount it will say thank you.
8) Almost all of the wandering monsters can talk
9) The healing potions taste of peppermint
10) Monsters often lie about values so ask them to evaluate things a few times
11) Some rings give you the ability to jump further
12) Buy lots of food because there isn't much of it around in quadrants 2, 3 and 4
13) Monsters won't tell you anything unless they have been bribed or have surrendered
14) If Bang appears then run because it depletes your magic
15) Whenever you find a monster that you wish to talk to, greet it
16) For every few monsters killed a point is added to your hits or your magic.
17) Take cups to Banbeut Hall for a magic bonus



DEATHWAKE

Here is a cheat from John Briggs **of Tyne and Wear for Quicksilva's** *Beach Head* **derivative.**
If you type in 'IT'S MY BIRTHDAY' then the Undaunted becomes invincible. Your escort ships are still vulnerable to enemy fire but you can use the Undaunted to shield them. In the mine screen you can just clear a way through by bumping into the mines.

TOMAHAWK

It is not every day that you get tips for a game that is mainly a flight simulation but if you are having problems with *Tomahawk* **then these hints from** Richard Naylor **of Clwyd may help.**
When you are in combat mode, speed can be picked up quickly by setting the torque to 100% then dipping the nose of the helicopter by about 30%. Within a short while you'll be moving very quickly. A good way to slow down is to roll from left to right or put the pitch up slightly. At the beginning of the game set the weapons to missiles and take off to about 200ft. Then clear an area of a 3 mile radius. Then descend to the helipad and replenish your missile stocks. On mission 4 the landscape is always changing so keep breaking out of the game and re-entering until you get the easiest landscape.

BARRY MCGUIGAN WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP BOXING

Another cheat but this time from Warren Randall **of Oadby for Activision's boxing simulation.**
When you are on the one player game and wish to extend your training time then choose a boxer with less than twelve weeks training time then refuse. Now go back to the menu with the nineteen boxers on it and pull back on the joystick. The training time will go up by two weeks.

SPELLBOUND

Spellbound **has brought tips from many readers but** Graham Needham **of Penarth presented the best set. All figures in brackets are locations on the map. If there is just one figure then it is the first initial of someone's name.**

Characters
Florin the dwarf (C5)
Orik the Cleric (D9)
Lady Rosmar (A2)
Elrand the half elven (D4)
Thor (C8)
Banshee (in glowing bottle)
Gimbal the Wizard (F9)

Most of the characters will help you somewhere in the castle but they must first be given an object that they desire.

Florin the dwarf - give the bottle of liquid to him and then get it back, it will restore your energy. Give him the bar of gold, the broken talisman and the tube of glue. Then command him to help you. He will fix the talisman.

Lady Rosmar - summon her to (F3), give the pocket laser to her and then ask her to help. She will burn a hole in the wall.

Elrand the Halfelven - summon him to (D6) then give him the trumpet. Now command him to help. He will then blow the trumpet and the wall collapses.

Samson the Strong - summon him to (F7), then give the javelin to him. Now command him to help. A platform across the pit will be built

Thor - get the Miolinir off Elrand then summon Thor to the lift. Give the Miolinir to him and command Thor to help. He will fix the control box. You can now go to levels F and G. Summon Thor to (B2) and command him to help (he must have the Miolinir). He will send a bolt of lightning at the tower which loosens a wall. This must be done before Elrand can destroy the wall at (D6).

Banshee - once it has been released then you can command it to help. This will provide you with clues.

Orik the cleric - He wants the book of shadows.

Objects

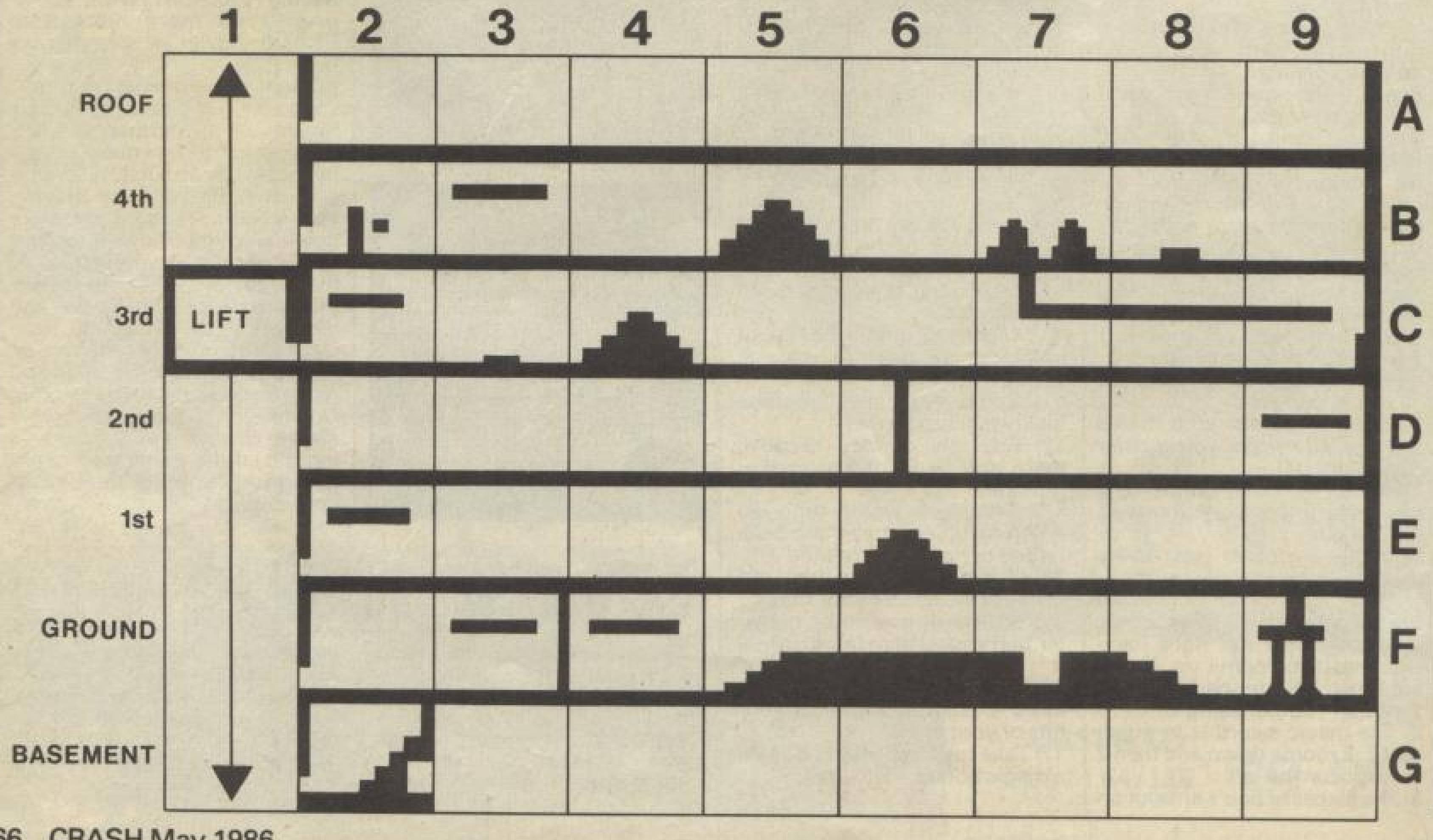
Four leaf clover (A2): carry this when casting Candlium illuminatus.
Battle of liquid (A2): see Florin.
Wand of command (A9): you can command people when carrying this.
Javelin (B9): see Samson.
Ancient scroll (B2): read it for a clue.
Engraved candle (C2): for casting Candlium illuminatus.



Key: read it for a clue.
Teleport key (C6): when you are carrying this you can teleport to the teleport pad.
Red herring (C7): part 1 of the Fumaticus Protection spell.
Power pong plant (G2): part 2 of the Fumaticus Protection spell.
Glowing bottle (C7): needed to get past room (C3); when it is dropped it releases Banshee.
Book of shadows (D3): not known but Orik likes it.
Gold bar (D6): See Florin.
White gold ring (D8): not known but it is very magical.
Pocket laser (E3): see Lady Rosmar.
Broken Talisman (E7): see Florin.
Magic Talisman: part 1 of the Project Physical Body spell.
Crystal ball: part 2 of the Project Physical Body spell.
Miolinir (E): see Thor.
Elf horn (S): when you are carrying this you can summon people.
Book of runes (E3): pick this up along with the runestone and you will be able to read it.
Tube of glue (E6): see Florin.
Sticky bun (E2): once you have picked this up you cannot drop it.
Trumpet (E9): see Elrand the halfelven.
Mirror: when you have this you can see what you are carrying and the present status of your energy level.
Pool of liquid (E3): stand on this and cast Armouris Photonicus.

Spells

Crystalium Spectralis: not known but probably something to do with the 3 coloured crystals.



POKES CORNER

All of this month's pokes are supplied by Keith Walker of Birmingham. All provide infinite lives or the equivalent on the game they're for. As an extra bonus to those of you that bought the Pokes Tape, all of these routines are on there.

Candlium Illuminatus: not known but the four leaf clover and the candle are needed to cast it.
Armouris Photonicus: stand on the pool of liquid at (E3) and cast the spell. Once you have cast it you can travel safely through (C3) without the glowing bottle.
Fumaticus Protectium: once cast you can travel safely through (E3).
Project Physical Body: once cast you can travel to people.

The Game
You start in (C6). Drop the advert, then pick up the teleport key. Now teleport. Go right, then up and back into (C7). Pick up the glowing bottle and teleport. Pick up the teleport pad and go all the way left to the lift. On the way pick up the red herring and drop the teleport pad in (C5). Move the lift to level 2 and move right until you find Samson, take the Elf horn from him. Go back to the lift and drop the Red herring. Now go to the roof and go all the way right on the way collect the Bottle of liquid and the Wand of command. Teleport to Florin then exchange the Bottle of liquid with him until your energy is replenished. Then command him to wake up. Take the Teleport pad and go to the lift. Drop the Teleport pad and summon Florin. Now command him to sleep. Move to the second floor, find Elrand. Take Miolinir from him and teleport back to the lift. Summon Thor and give Miolinir to him then command him to help. After that command him to sleep. Move to the basement and get the Red herring and the Power pong plant. Cast the Fumaticus Protectium spell then drop them. Now go to the ground floor, move right and get the laser. Summon Lady Rosmar, give the laser to her and command her to help. Now stand on the Pool of Liquid and cast Amarous Photonicus. Go back to the lift, move to the first floor, go all the way right and get the trumpet then teleport. Command Thor to wake up and go to (B2). Then summon Thor and command him to help. Go back to the lift. Move to level 2 and go all the way right. Summon Elrand, give him the trumpet and command him to help. That should get you quite far into the game but you will have to wait until the rest of the solution arrives before you can complète it.

MIKIE

```
10 BORDER 0: PAPER 0: INK 0
20 CLEAR 65535
30 RESTORE
40 LET TOT = 0: LET B = 1
50 FOR N = 23296 TO 23457:
READ A: POKE N, A
60 LET TOT = TOT + A::B: LET B
= B + 1
70 NEXT N
80 IF TOT <> 1547454 THEN
PRINT INK 7;"ERROR IN DATA":
STOP
90 PRINT INK 7;AT 9, 4;"PLAY IN
MIKIE MASTER TAPE";AT 11,
10;"FROM THE START"
100 RANDOMIZE USR 23296
1000 DATA 237, 091, 083, 092,
042
1010 DATA 089, 092, 043, 205,
229
1020 DATA 025, 221, 033, 224,
091
1030 DATA 017, 017, 000, 175,
055
1040 DATA 205, 086, 005, 042,
083
1050 DATA 092, 237, 075, 235,
091
1060 DATA 205, 085, 022, 221,
042
1070 DATA 083, 092, 237, 091,
235
1080 DATA 091, 062, 255, 055,
205
1090 DATA 086, 005, 042, 083,
092
1100 DATA 017, 050, 002, 025,
017
1110 DATA 018, 248, 001, 105,
002
1120 DATA 205, 139, 091, 205,
126
1130 DATA 091, 033, 064, 248,
017
1140 DATA 064, 247, 001, 128,
000
1150 DATA 237, 176, 062, 247,
050
1160 DATA 089, 247, 050, 093,
247
1170 DATA 050, 101, 247, 050,
121
1180 DATA 247, 062, 201, 050,
122
1190 DATA 247, 205, 064, 247,
033
1200 DATA 113, 091, 017, 086,
250
1210 DATA 001, 013, 000, 237,
176
1220 DATA 195, 020, 250, 175,
033
1230 DATA 138, 159, 006, 006,
119
1240 DATA 035, 016, 252, 049,
118
1250 DATA 105, 062, 249, 050,
161
1260 DATA 091, 033, 064, 248,
229
1270 DATA 209, 001, 059, 002,
058
1280 DATA 161, 091, 206, 010,
056
1290 DATA 011, 050, 161, 091,
174
1300 DATA 119, 237, 160, 234,
139
1310 DATA 091, 201, 198, 128,
024
1320 DATA 241, 193
```

WESTBANK

```
10 CLEAR 65535
20 PRINT AT 9, 2;"Enter No of
LIVES (3 to 255)"
30 INPUT A$: BEEP .1, 1
40 IF A$ = "" THEN GO TO 30
50 FOR B = 1 TO LEN A$
60 IF A$(B) < "0" OR A$(B) > "9"
THEN GO TO 30: NEXT B
70 LET LIVES = VAL A$
80 IF LIVES < 3 OR LIVES > 255
THEN GO TO 30
90 PRINT AT 9, 2;"PLAY IN
WEST BANK MASTER TAPE";
AT 11, 9;"FROM THE START"
100 LOAD ""CODE 65001
110 POKE 65027, 62
120 POKE 65035, 16
130 POKE 65036, 254
140 POKE 65038, 197
150 POKE 65039, 254
160 POKE 65153, 153
170 POKE 65154, 254
180 POKE 65164, 128
190 POKE 65165, 254
200 POKE 65178, 157
210 POKE 65179, 254
220 POKE 65186, 7
230 FOR N = 65221 TO 65256:
READ A: POKE N, A: NEXT N
240 RANDOMIZE USR 65024
250 DATA 033, 211, 254, 017, 000
260 DATA 064, 001, 022, 000, 237
270 DATA 176, 195, 000, 064, 033
280 DATA 255, 253, 017, 255, 255
290 DATA 001, 000, 165, 237, 184
300 DATA 049, 255, 095, 062,
LIVES
310 DATA 050, 010, 200, 195, 130
320 DATA 253
```

ZORRO

```
10 BORDER 0: PAPER 0: INK 0
20 CLEAR 65535
30 RESTORE
40 LET TOT = 0: LET B = 1
50 FOR N = 23296 TO 23449:
READ A: POKE N, A
60 LET TOT = TOT + A*B: LET B
= B + 1
70 NEXT N
80 IF TOT <> 1553650 THEN
PRINT INK 7;"ERROR IN DATA":
STOP
90 PRINT INK 7; AT 9, 4;"PLAY
IN ZORRO MASTER TAPE";AT
11, 10;"FROM THE START"
100 RANDOMIZE USR 23296
1000 DATA 237, 091, 083, 092,
042
1010 DATA 089, 092, 043, 205,
229
1020 DATA 025, 221, 033, 224,
091
1030 DATA 017, 017, 000, 175,
055
1040 DATA 205, 086, 005, 042,
083
1050 DATA 092, 237, 075, 235,
091
1060 DATA 205, 085, 022, 221,
042
1070 DATA 083, 092, 237, 091,
235
1080 DATA 091, 062, 255, 055,
205
1090 DATA 086, 005, 042, 083,
092
1100 DATA 017, 050, 002, 025,
017
1110 DATA 131, 251, 001, 080,
002
1120 DATA 205, 131, 091, 205,
118
1130 DATA 091, 033, 177, 251,
017
1140 DATA 177, 250, 001, 128,
000
1150 DATA 237, 176, 062, 250,
050
1160 DATA 202, 250, 050, 206,
250
1170 DATA 050, 214, 250, 050,
234
1180 DATA 250, 062, 201, 050,
235
1190 DATA 250, 205, 177, 250,
033
1200 DATA 113, 091, 017, 169,
253
1210 DATA 001, 005, 000, 237,
176
1220 DATA 195, 133, 253, 175,
050
1230 DATA 225, 209, 000, 062,
255
1240 DATA 050, 153, 091, 033,
177
1250 DATA 251, 229, 209, 001,
034
1260 DATA 002, 058, 153, 091,
206
1270 DATA 010, 056, 011, 050,
153
1280 DATA 091, 174, 119, 237,
160
1290 DATA 234, 131, 091, 201,
198
1300 DATA 128, 024, 241, 193
```

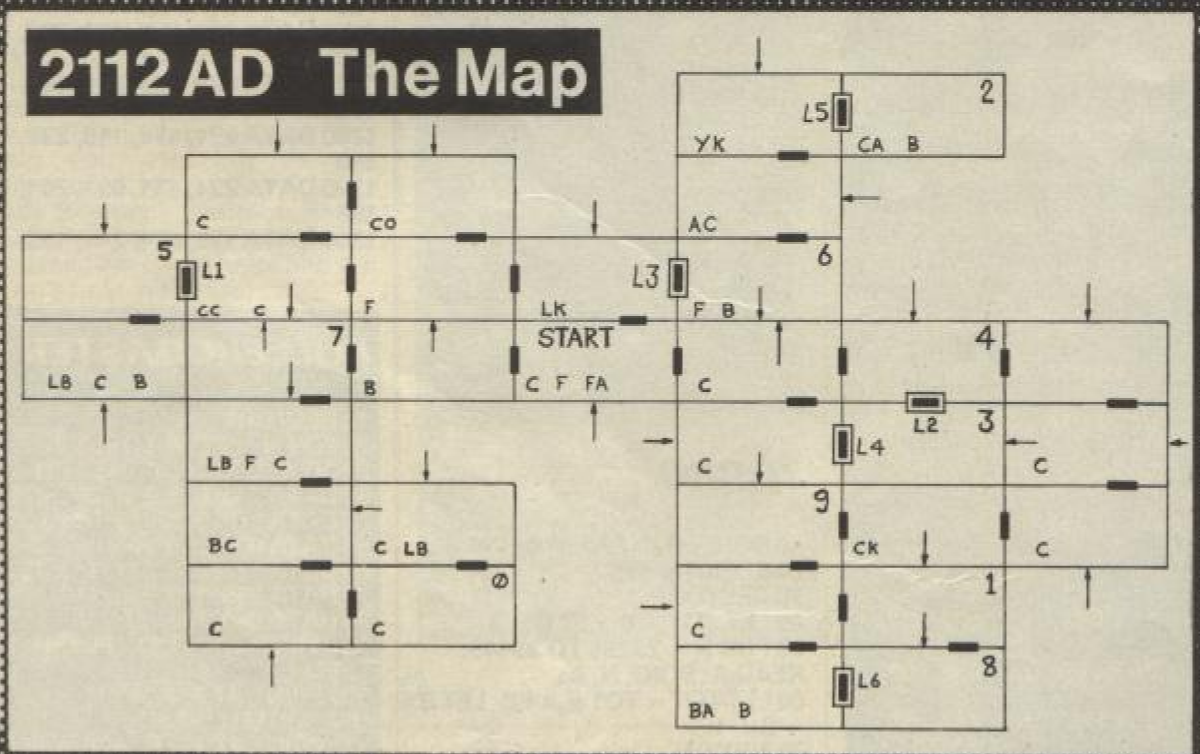
ROLLERCOASTER

```
10 RESTORE
20 FOR N = 23300 TO 23326:
READ A: POKE N, A: NEXT N
30 DATA 243, 049, 232, 096, 175
40 DATA 253, 033, 255, 090, 033
50 DATA 000, 250, 205, 093, 250
60 DATA 175, 033, 242, 142, 119
70 DATA 035, 119, 035, 119, 195
80 DATA 060, 140
90 PRINT AT 4, 13; FLASH 1;
"SELECT"
100 PRINT AT 8, 7;"1
UNLIMITED LIVES"
110 PRINT AT 10, 7;"2 NUMBER
OF LIVES"
120 PRINT AT 15, 8;"PRESS KEY
1 OR 2"
130 LET A$ = INKEY$: IF A$ = ""
THEN GO TO 130
140 BEEP .1, 1: IF A$ < "1" OR
A$ > "2" THEN GO TO 130
150 IF A$ <> "1" THEN GO SUB
200
160 CLS
170 PRINT AT 9, 3;"PLAY IN
ROLLER MASTER TAPE";AT 11,
10;"FROM THE START"
180 LOAD ""CODE
190 RANDOMIZE USR 23300
200 CLS
210 PRINT AT 9, 2;"Enter No of
lives (10 to 255)"
220 INPUT B$: BEEP .1, 1
230 IF B$ = "" THEN GO TO 220
240 FOR C = 1 TO LEN B$
250 IF B$(C) < "0" OR B$(C) >
"9" THEN GO TO 220
260 NEXT C
270 LET LIVES = VAL B$
280 IF LIVES < 10 OR LIVES >
255 THEN GO TO 220
290 FOR N = 23315 TO 23322:
READ A: POKE N, A: NEXT N
300 DATA 062, LIVES, 050, 076,
152
310 DATA 195, 060, 140
320 RETURN
```

NOMAD

```
10 BORDER 0: PAPER 0: INK 0
20 CLEAR 64000
30 RESTORE
40 LET TOT = 0: LET B = 1
50 FOR N = 23296 TO 23455:
READ A: POKE N, A
60 LET TOT = TOT + A*B: LET B
= B + 1
70 NEXT N
80 IF TOT <> 1640945 THEN
PRINT INK 7;"ERROR IN DATA":
STOP
90 PRINT INK 7;AT 9, 4;"PLAY IN
NOMAD MASTER TAPE";AT 11,
10;"FROM THE START"
100 RANDOMIZE USR 23296
1000 DATA 237, 091, 083, 092,
042
1010 DATA 089, 092, 043, 205,
229
1020 DATA 025, 006, 003, 197,
221
1030 DATA 033, 224, 091, 017,
017
1040 DATA 000, 175, 055, 205,
086
1050 DATA 005, 193, 016, 240,
042
1060 DATA 083, 092, 237, 075,
235
1070 DATA 091, 205, 085, 022,
221
1080 DATA 042, 083, 092, 237,
091
1090 DATA 235, 091, 062, 255,
055
1100 DATA 205, 086, 005, 042,
083
1110 DATA 092, 017, 050, 002,
025
1120 DATA 017, 107, 253, 001,
087
1130 DATA 002, 205, 137, 091,
205
1140 DATA 124, 091, 033, 153,
253
1150 DATA 017, 153, 252, 001,
128
1160 DATA 000, 237, 176, 062,
252
1170 DATA 050, 178, 252, 050,
182
1180 DATA 252, 050, 190, 252,
050
1190 DATA 210, 252, 062, 201,
050
1200 DATA 211, 252, 205, 153,
252
1210 DATA 033, 119, 091, 017,
145
1220 DATA 255, 001, 005, 000,
237
1230 DATA 176, 195, 109, 255,
175
1240 DATA 050, 231, 156, 000,
062
1250 DATA 197, 050, 159, 091,
033
1260 DATA 153, 253, 229, 209,
001
1270 DATA 041, 002, 058, 159,
091
1280 DATA 206, 010, 056, 011,
050
1290 DATA 159, 091, 174, 119,
237
1300 DATA 160, 234, 137, 091,
201
1310 DATA 198, 128, 024, 241,
193
9999 STOP
```

2112 AD The Map



KEY

C = CAN
F = FUSE
CO = CAN OPENER
CC = CASH POINTCARD
LB = LIGHT BULB
B = BOMB
BC = BARCLAY CARD
LK = LEGGE KEY
AC = ACCESS CARD
YK = YALE KEY
CK = CHUBB KEY
BA = BATTERY
CA = CALCULATOR

LOCKED DOORS

L1 - LEGGE KEY
L2 - CASH CARD
L3 - BARCLAY CARD
L4 - ACCESS CARD
L5 - CHUBB KEY
L6 - YALE KEY

2112 AD

Design Design's icon driven game that so few people can actually play has attracted these tips from Steve Woolrich **of** Doncaster.

The cashpoint card, Access card and Barclaycard are all keys and open the locked doors (as indicated on the map). The bombs that are scattered around are for blowing up the androids that paralyse you, but only work if you drop one in their path. Should you get paralysed by an android, using the first aid kit gets your character on the move again, and it's a good idea to keep this with you all the time. When you want to eat you must have the can and the can opener. Should you over charge Poddy then the fuse mends him. Poddy's main use is to carry your objects about with you.

NOMAD

G. Needham **and** Eddie Wilson **of Penarth have come up with the goods for** ***NOMAD*****. These tips should help you get a bit further into the game.**

Round Guns
These don't fire very often but are usually a bit of a pain. The best thing to do is to go in with all guns blazing.

Normal Guns
Don't get in front of these. Attack them from an angle.

Homing Missiles and Bases
Try to take out the base before a missile is launched. If you don't do this you will have a missile following you from screen to screen. Try to make them crash into walls because they can only do 90 degree turns.

Robots
The best form of attack is to quietly enter a room and constantly fire at the position where a robot appears. Sometimes they may take a while to appear.

General Hint
Take as many guns and robots out as you can because when you lose a life you are sent back a few screens to a starting screen. This doesn't apply on your last life.

That seems to be it for another month. My postbag is far from empty but my space has been filled. This month's winner of the £20 of software is G. Needham for his bumper collection of tips more of which will be featured in next month's issue. Keep sending your tips and pokes to:
ROBIN CANDY'S PLAYING TIPS
CRASH MAGAZINE PO BOX 10,
LUDLOW
SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB
and do make sure you mention Crash on the envelope because if you don't it makes our sorting dept awfully angry.

TOP 30 FOR MAY

1(2) COMMANDO **Elite**
2(1) ELITE **Firebird**
3(7) BACK TO SKOOL **Microsphere**
4(5) STARQUAKE **Bubble Bus**
5(3) EXPLODING FIST **Melbourne House**
6(11) SABOTEUR **Durell**
7(16) GUNFRIGHT **Ultimate**
8(8) HYPERSPORTS **Imagine**
9(15) ROBIN O' THE WOOD **Odin**
10 (—) WINTER GAMES **Epyx/US Gold**

This month still sees **Elite's** COMMANDO and **Firebird's** ELITE dancing a duet in the top two places with COMMANDO taking the lead this time. Still fighting its way up the mainstreet is GUNFRIGHT from **Ultimate** in seventh position. Biggest new sproing is MOVIE at number twelve, sitting on the top of **Imagine's** pile of four games in the chart this month. At the bottom of the chart ZOIDS from **Martech** just squeezes in, with highest new entry falling into 10th place — WINTER GAMES from **Epyx/US Gold**. HIGHWAY ENCOUNTER seems to be in trouble, taking an eighteen place tumble.



11 (13) SPELLBOUND **Mastertronic**
12 (—) M.O.V.I.E. **Imagine**
13 (6) MATCH DAY **Ocean**
14 (4) FAIRLIGHT **The Edge**
15 (14) YIE AR KUNG FU **Imagine**
16 (9) GYROSCOPE **Melbourne House**
17 (26) RAMBO **Ocean**
18 (20) TOMAHAWK **Digital Integration**
19 (22) THREE WEEKS IN PARADISE **Mikro-Gen**
20 (—) SWEEVO'S WORLD **Gargoyle Games**

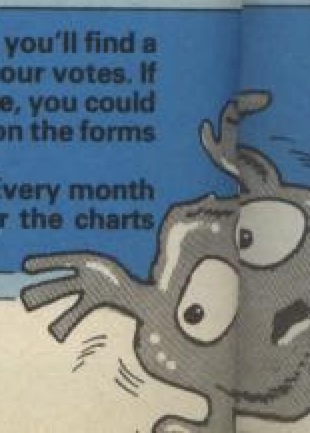
21 (—) MIKIE **Imagine**
22 (—) ROLLER COASTER **Elite**
23 (—) NODES OF YESOD **Odin**
24 (12) SPY Vs SPY **Beyond**
25 (—) MONTY ON THE RUN **Gremlin Graphics**
26 (—) SKOOL DAZE **Microsphere**
27 (17) TAU CETI **CRL**
28 (10) HIGHWAY ENCOUNTER **Vortex**
29 (—) ZOIDS **Martech**
30 (—) BARRY McGUIGAN's BOXING **Activision**

Barry Littlefair of Basingstoke, Hants should be getting up early this month as Aunt Aggie will be winging forty pounds' worth of software towards his sweaty little palms. Early morning postbox vigils for CRASH Hats and T Shirts will be undertaken by **Marcus De Silva** of Sidcup in Kent; **BJ Weeks** of Birdbrook, Essex; **Lee Russell** from deepest Liddon country in the Eastend of Laaandan and **D Austen** (Sah!!) who, hailing from the Officers Mess at RAF North Luffenham,

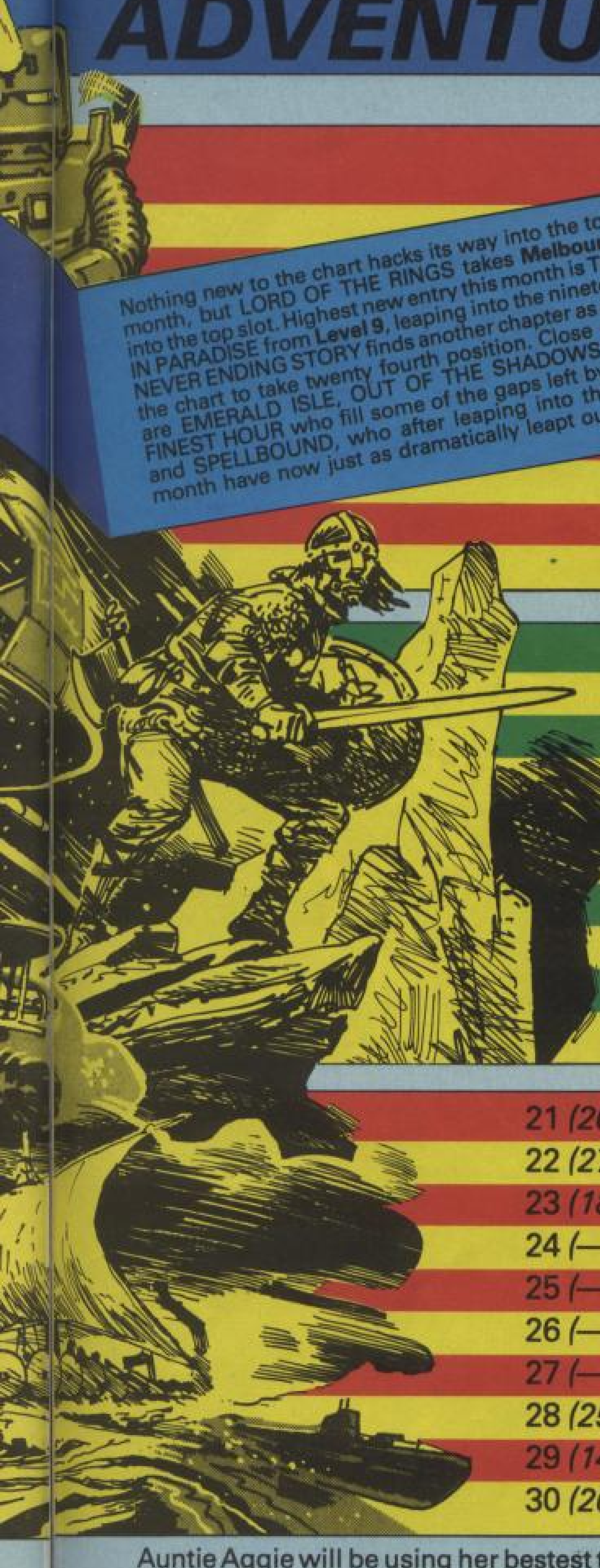
The CRASH HOTLINE AND ADVENTURE CHART is Britain's most important popularity chart — for Spectrum Software, at least. The chart depends entirely on your support and we need your votes in order to produce the analysis of who's playing what.

Nowadays, there's only ONE WAY to submit your votes — and that's by post. Towards the back of the magazine, lurking very close to the competition results bit, you'll find a couple of coupons that you can use to send us your votes. If you're really unkeen on cutting up your magazine, you could always use a photocopy, or copy out the details on the forms onto a plain piece of paper.

Whatever you do, get those voting forms in. Every month we draw out a total of ten winning forms after the charts



ADVENTURE TOP 30 CHART



Nothing new to the chart hacks its way into the top ten this month, but LORD OF THE RINGS takes **Melbourne House** into the top slot. Highest new entry this month is THE WORM IN PARADISE from **Level 9**, leaping into the nineteenth hole. NEVER ENDING STORY finds another chapter as it returns to the chart to take twenty fourth position. Close on its heels are EMERALD ISLE, OUT OF THE SHADOWS and THEIR FINEST HOUR who fill some of the gaps left by FAIRLIGHT and SPELLBOUND, who after leaping into the charts last month have now just as dramatically leapt out again!

1 *(3)* LORD OF THE RINGS **Melbourne House**
2 *(10)* MARSPORT **Gargoyle Games**
3 *(13)* DUN DARACH **Gargoyle Games**
4 *(5)* RED MOON **Level 9**
5 *(11)* FOURTH PROTOCOL **Century/Hutchinson**
6 *(23)* THE HOBBIT **Melbourne House**
7 *(7)* DOOMDARK'S REVENGE **Beyond**
8 *(15)* SHADOWFIRE **Beyond**
9 *(12)* LORDS OF TIME **Level 9**
10 *(1)* LORDS OF MIDNIGHT **Beyond**

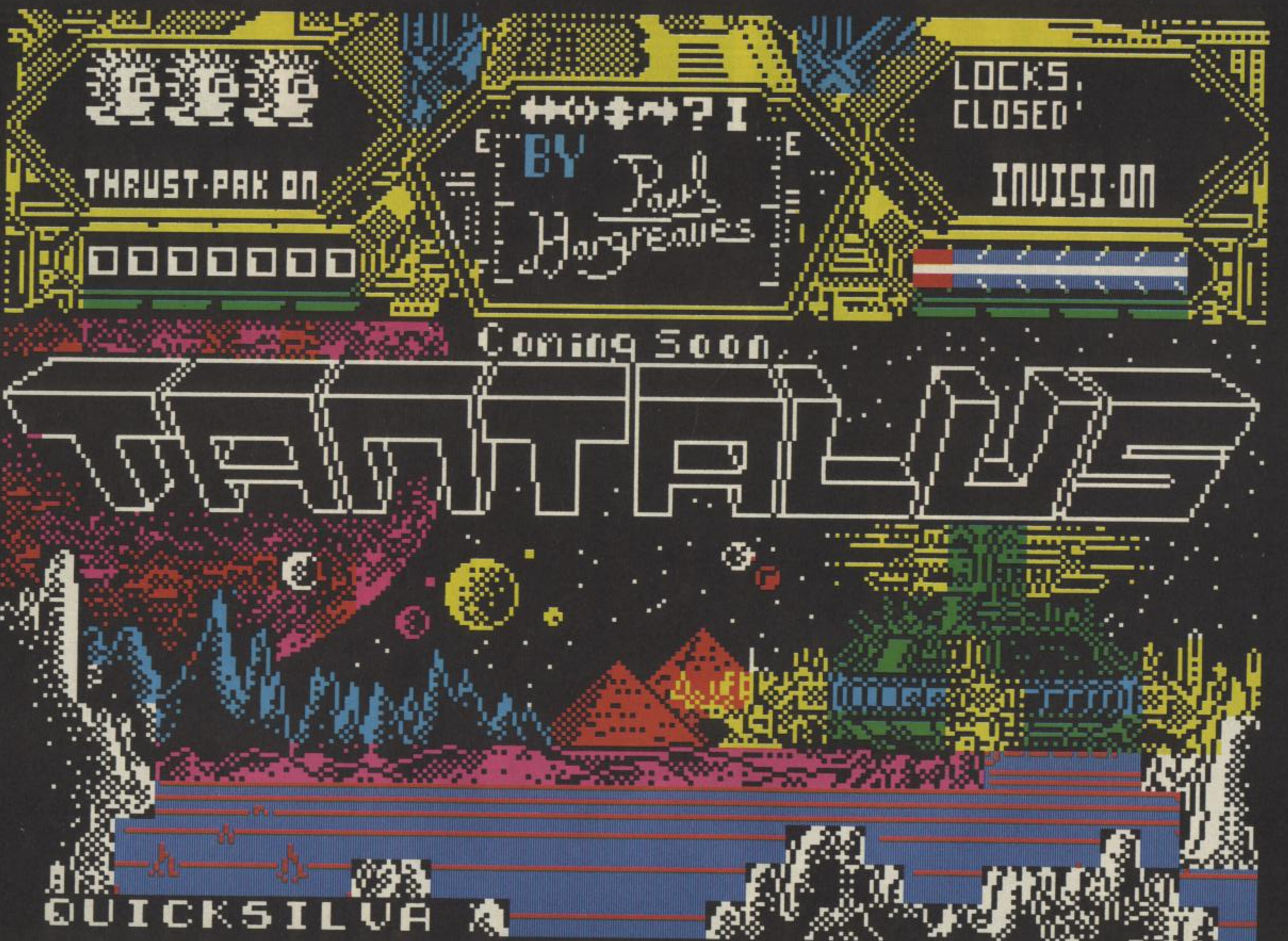
11 *(8)* BORED OF THE RINGS **Silversoft**
12 *(4)* SWORDS AND SORCERY **PSS**
13 *(22)* SHERLOCK **Melbourne House**
14 *(17)* FRANKIE **Ocean**
15 *(24)* GREMLINS **Adventure International**
16 *(9)* ENIGMA FORCE **Beyond**
17 *(21)* TIR NA NOG **Gargoyle Games**
18 *(18)* ROBIN OF SHERWOOD **Adventure International**
19 *(—)* WORM IN PARADISE **Level 9**
20 *(28)* ADRIAN MOLE **Level 9/Mozaic**

21 *(20)* DRAGONTORC **Hewsons**
22 *(27)* AVALON **Hewsons**
23 *(18)* ROBIN O' THE WOOD **Odin**
24 *(—)* NEVER ENDING STORY **Ocean**
25 *(—)* EMERALD ISLE **Level 9**
26 *(—)* OUT OF THE SHADOWS **Mizar**
27 *(—)* THEIR FINEST HOUR **Century**
28 *(25)* TERRORMOLINOS **Melbourne House**
29 *(14)* SPIDERMAN **Adventure International**
30 *(26)* URBAN UPSTART **Richard Shepherd**

Auntie Aggie will be using her bestest typing skills when she gets in touch with **Michael Scott** of Tyne and Wear to tell him he's won the software draw this month and is due for £40 worth. As usual, four lucky runners up will be receiving a CRASH Hat and T Shirt with which to enter the world of computer fashions. They are . . . **Marc James** who jogs around Loughborough; **George Adcock** whose back garden is Surrey; **RN Greenwood** from stainless Sheffield and **Pamela Sellick** who's an Abingdon girlie.

have been compiled, five for each chart, and prizes go whizzing off to the lucky senders of those forms. The first form out of the sack of Hotline votes, like the first one to come out of the Adventure voting box, wins its sender £40 worth of software of his or her choice. And a CRASH T Shirt, of course.

The next four voting slips for each chart, that's eight voters in all, win a T Shirt and Cap. Don't miss out on your chance to win all these goodies for the cost of a 17p stamp and the time it takes to put pen and your opinions to paper. CRASH HOTLINE and CRASH ADVENTURE TRAIL are what we call the giant boxes that your votes go into, and they can be reached via PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1DB.


THRUST·PAK ON
BY Paul Hargreaves
LOCKS, CLOSED'
INVISI·ON
Coming Soon
TANTALUS
QUICKSILVA



Pyjamarama Completed 97%
Everyone's a Wally Completed
Herbert's Dummy Run Completed
Three Weeks in Paradise Completed 100%.
Atic Atac Completed
Sabre Wulf Completed
Knight Lore 64%
Transam Completed
Back to Skool Got frog
Kevin Giles, Carterton, Oxford.

Pyjamarama Completed 96%
Match Day 8-0 in 5 minutes
Football Manager Completed everything 100% max
World Cup Football Won World Cup
Frank Bruno Peter Perfect
Commando 210,200
Skool Daze Completed
Back to Skool Put frog in cup
Atic Atac Completed 86%
Paul Morgan, Dinas Powys, South Glamorgan

Highway Encounter Completed
Booty 43 objects
Back to Skool Completed
Airwolf Rescued 2 scientists
Rambo 18,500
Jetpac 93,760
Action Biker Rescued Marti
Atic Atac 89%
Jet Set Willy 71 objects
Full Throttle 3rd (all tracks)
Fairlight Completed
Football Manager Division 1
Quackshot Completed 14 screens
Exploding Fist 10th Dan (800,490)
Simon Crabb, Leadenham, Lincoln

Frank Bruno's Boxing Completed
Jetpac Completed 5 times
Avenger Mission Completed
Atic Atac 91%
Underwurlde 96% Completed
Pyjamarama 94% Completed
Manic Miner The Warehouse
Bruce Lee Killed Wizard 12 times
Automania 7 cars Completed
Ghostbusters Completed many times, money £93,000
Airwolf Completed
Hunchback Completed
Chuckie Egg 31 screens
The Way Of The Exploding Fist Tenth Dan
Action Biker Completed
Booty Gold key
C5 Clive All levels completed
Back to Skool Completed
Fighting Warrior 9th person
Froggy Completed
Z-Man Completed
Full Throttle First on Silverstone and W. Germany
Snake Pit Completed
Tron 58 screens
Zaxxon Completed
Sabre Wulf Completed
Urban Upstart Completed
Witches Cauldron 54%
Pystron overall Fair
Wheelie Completed
Richard Budd, Nr Market Drayton, Shropshire

Chuckie Egg 853,350, level 42
Gunfright Second bandit killed
Commando 77,550, 4th stage
Exploding Fist 8th Dan
Bruce Lee 8 wizards killed
Atic Atac Completed, 99%
Dave Tidmarsh, Syston, Leics

Monopoly Beat all other computer opponents with £12,381
J.Barrington's Squash Beat all levels
Gyroscope 2,230 (level 3)
Hypersports 139,419: Swimming 27.12; Shooting 9100; Long Horse 8.57; Archery 3230; Triple Jump 14.44m; Weightlifting 165 kg
Spy Hunter Novice, 136.505 Expert, 91.280
American Football won 45-20
Exploding Fist 37,100 (7th Dan)
Minder £6.384
Rocky Horror Show 14 pieces
Raid Over Moscow 60,550
Baseball won on all levels
Trashman 9598 (level 5)
Transversion 7305 (level 7)
Starstrike 624,000
Commando 55.800
Full Throttle 4th
Ant Attack 10,615
Pheenix 37,580
Nick Clemons, Wolston, Warwickshire

Back to Skool Completed
Match Day unbeaten
Commando Area 5
Sweevo's World 38%
Saboteur Completed
Gunfright Rounded 5 Baddies
F.A. Cup Game Won cup with the Arsenal
Three Weeks in Paradise Completed
Mikie Clocked Twice
Movie 24%, 0.011
Bruce Lee Completed 17 times
Rambo 46,400
Highway Encounter Clocked Twice
Nightshade Completed
Daniel Garcia, Edgeware, Middlesex

The Biz No 1 for 4 weeks
Stonkers Completed both levels with two units lost
Admiral Graf Spee 51672 promoted to Admiral
Beach Head 106,600
Elite Deadly, 57,396.5 credits
Kent Batten, Sherborne, Dorset

Herbert's Dummy Run Completed with 92 Jelly Babies
Three Weeks in Paradise Completed
Everyone's a Wally Completed
Transformers Completed
Monty is Innocent Completed 1 min 12 secs
Gunfright Jessie James
Saboteur Completed levels 1-8
Simon Anderson, Perth, Scotland

Mr Wong's Loopy Laundry Screen 7
Booty 112 Bits
Knight Lore Completed
Nodes of Yesod 85%
Tribble Trouble 10,790
Magic Carpet 1,700
Commando 3rd Stage
Giddy Game Show Completed
Vegas Jackpot £24.00
Andrew Edwards, Portsmouth, Hants

Winter Games Ski Jump 225.8; Hot Dog 19.2; Speed Skating 34.4; Figure Skating 3.6; Biathlon 1.40; Bobsleigh 25.84; Free Skating 17.6
Finders Keepers Completed
Jet Set Willy Completed
Manic Miner Completed
Starstrike 2,866,500
Commando 130,000
Wheelie Level 3
Exploding Fist 840,600
Kung Fu Black Belt 7
Back to Skool completed
Frank N Stein Level 15
Match Day Beaten computer on all levels
Gunfright Killed 3rd Bandit
Saboteur Set bomb and escaped with disk on level 2
Sabrewulf completed
Everyone's a Wally completed
Richard Harrison, Herts

Spy Hunter 200483
Exploding Fist 115,850 3rd Dan
Wheelie completed
Back to Skool completed level 1
Winter Games Ski Jump 220.3; Hot Dog 10; Speed Skating 37.9; Figure Skating 2.7; Biathlon 2.50 mins; Bobsleigh 26.88 secs; Free Skating 1.7 (oops!)
Match Day completed, won final 17-0
Ghostbusters completed, £1 Million
Yie Ar Kung Fu Level 19, beaten by Fan
Frankie Goes to Hollywood 99% BANG
Douglas Tedcastle, Clarkston, Glasgow

Let's all hope that this month's dose of high score gore doesn't prove too upsetting for the Moral Majority — or anyone else who might not like a bit of good red fun (tastefully rendered in monochrome).

The Ludlow Town Hall just missed its centenary this month — it had to be knocked down before it fell on unsuspecting Ludlovians — but the gibbet is live, well and has just been re-creosoted so it should withstand the spring showers Ludlow is famous for. Tenants are wanted for the gibbet, so keep sending those scores in and make sure you don't cheat.

Commando 1,700,080 — 178 men
Ben Stone, CRASH Ego Dept

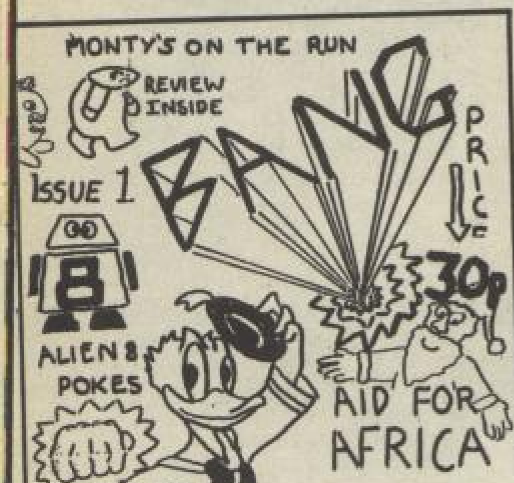
Sam Fox Strip Poker All the pictures
Dom Handy, Room 2, CRASH Ego Dept



FANZINES

Following on from our first look at the Fanzine circuit in November l t

Well, it seems that we really sparked something off with our last feature on Fanzines. The response was so great that we really felt there should be a follow up. What I want to know is: were you all inspired into starting mags, because of our last feature, or have they simply crept out of the woodwork after years of anonimity?



One of the fanzines that was definitely prompted into existence by our last article is BANG. Apart from the desire to produce their own computer magazine, those enterprising lads from (I think) the Joseph Rowntree school in York decided to put their journalistic skills to a profitable end and donated all the proceeds to the African Famine Relief Fund.

Apparently the lads first got the idea for BANG from seeing the selection of Fanzines we published in Issue 22, but also received mucho encouragement from their Computer and English teachers, as well as initial funding from their Headmaster.

The magazine itself is packed with previews, reviews, competitions, tips and a pull-out map supplement in the issue I saw. The magazine is compiled by **Mark Whitelock** Editor, **Ben Mayfield** Assistant Editor and Artist, and **Steven Baines** Accountant. And what a good team they do make. I wish them every success with BANG and hope they are still making enough to contribute towards Aid in Africa.

BANG can be contacted at BANG Head Offices, 12 Farmstead Rise, Haxby, York.

E. .U
(Entertainm Mi

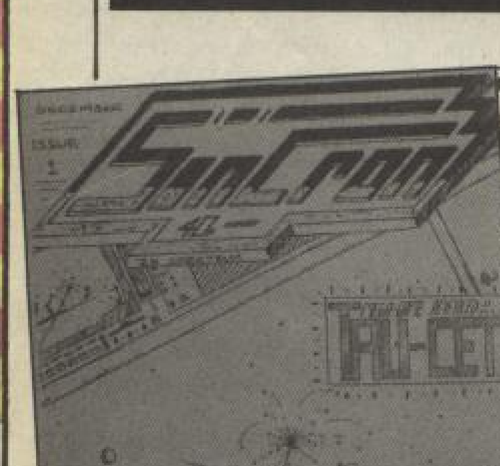
ENTERTAINMENT MICRO USER, incorporating DEMONIC HOBBIT, known to its friends as E.M.U, appears to be run almost single-handedly by fourteen year-old **Paul Rand** with a little help from his school chums **Peter Robinson** and **Adam Sadler**. **Jonathan Ashby** is the resident artist, and very good he is too. I really liked the lay-out style of this publications — very striking it is too, with red-framed pages. An accessory no bookshelf should be without.

Running to some 30 pages, it is published by *AZ One*, a subsidiary of *Paul Rand plc.* (something tells me this guy has ideas on world domination. Erm, you'd better drop the 'plc' bit Paul . . . unless you really are registered at Companies House as a public limited company!) My copy included a neat mix of news, reviews, hints and tips and a profile on Jonathan Ashby, Art Supremo, an art gallery page and a short story.

Mr Rand stresses that E.M.U. is a Computer/Role Playing game magazine, but with lots of thrills and spills thrown in to provide something for everyone. All this for 35p can't be bad. About the only thing this fanzine doesn't have is a letters page — perhaps Paul hasn't got access to a Hermes — no, this is where you come in. Paul Rand would like to hear from anyone interested in contributing to E.M.U.



E.M.U is available by mail order (20p p&p) from Domini House, Comet Hill, Easington, Peterlee, CO. Durham, SR8 3ER.





SINCRON is a very professionally produced publication, with a rather fetching green cover (December issue). Run by a group of 14-16 year olds from the Blackpool area who share



the common view that too many computer magazines are run by adults with too many adult views, SINCRON is written by the sort of people it is aimed at. (I do hope you are not implicating CRASH's views here, SINCRON Staff!).

The magazine is A4 size and packed with all sorts of reviews with % scores, playing tips, an adventure column, the latest chart according to the staff, features and a hilarious comic strip that follows the adventures of Ernie Doss.

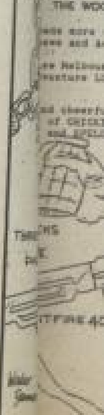
SINCRON is run by **Martyn Hartly** and **Paul Scrivin** who are anxious to have contributions from anyone in Blackpool. So Blackpoolians — or should that be Blackpudlians? — if you haven't heard of SINCRON yet, I suggest you listen out for it.

SINCRON'S address is: Sincron Magazine,435 Lytham Road, Blackpool, Lancs. FY4 1JQ.

From deepest Suffolk comes RAM, yet another fanzine inspired by our November feature. The RAM team comprises Jonathan Welch, Editor, **Simon Tricker** Editorial Assistant, **Tim Meston** Technical Editor, **Jason Mills** Art Editor, **Aaron Farris** Assistant Art Editor, **Carl Thompson** Playing Tips, **Ben Robinson** and **Gary Cutts,** Reviewers.

RAM runs to 34 pages and includes reviews, *Thompson's Playing Tips*, competitions and features as well as some impressive artwork. At 15p it's a snip!

Luckily, RAM have managed to get their printing done for free as well as some gratis publicity on their local radio station. **Jonathan Welch** and friends

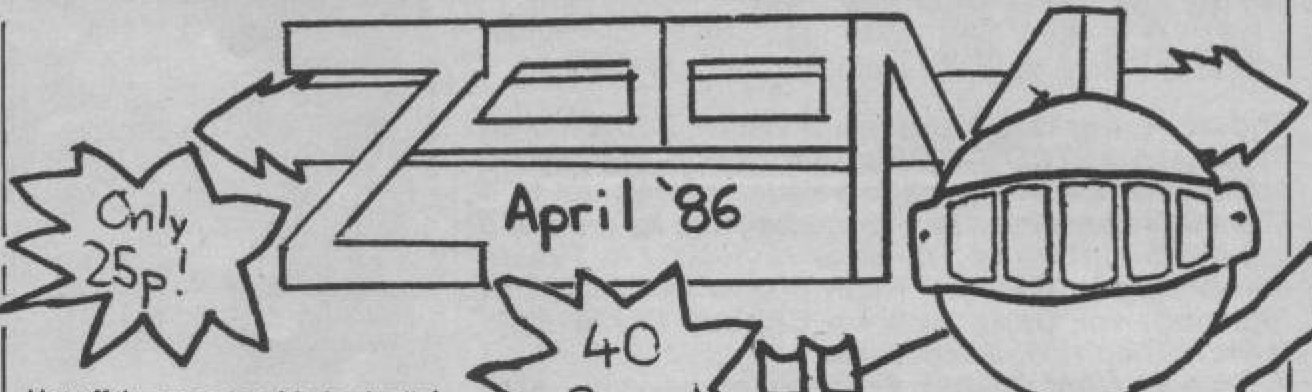


REVISITED

last year, HANNAH SMITH takes a look inside the CRASH Fanzine File . .

.N.U.
(...me Micro User)



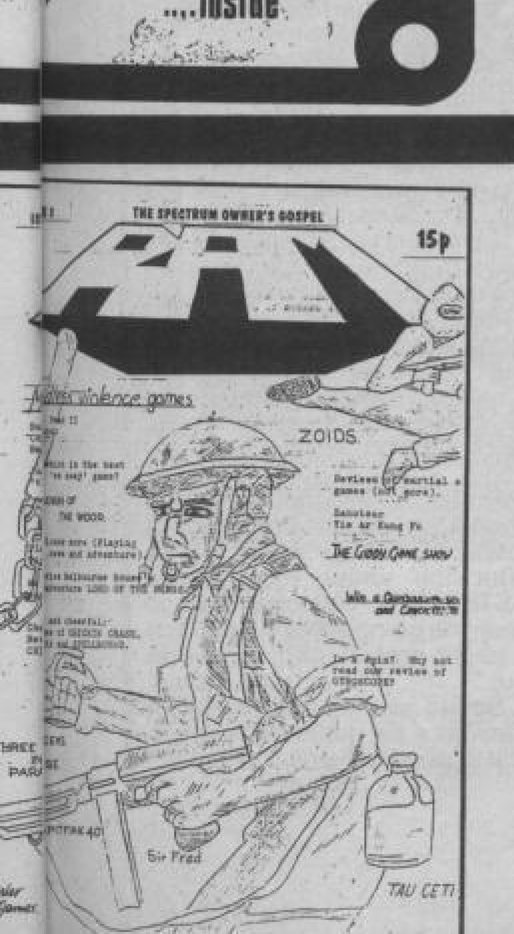




Hot off the presses with the April issue, ZOOM landed on the CRASH Fanzine desk, winging its way from Brighton. ZOOM boasts an impressive staff list: **Kevin Newman** Editor; **Justine Parkinson** Deputy Editor; **Steven Rea** Artist; **Toby Bowers** Top Reviewer; **Jason Kimber**, **David Newman** and **Kirsty Parkinson** Writers; 2Carol Newman who is responsible for *Brain's Page*; **Bruce Lindfield** Informationist; **Patrick Newman** photocopying, and not forgetting the office cat **Kit** and office Gerbil **Gerry**.

ZOOM is packed with competitions offering a multitude of games as prizes. There's also an Opinions section, comments, information and a very funny comic strip called Lunar Clive . . . maps, piccies, reviews, crosswords, a letters page — I could go on all night . . . My copy of ZOOM is literally bursting at the seams, and is thoroughly good value at 40 rip-snorting pages for a mere 25p.

ZOOM can be obtained from ZOOM Offices, 15, Argyle Road, Brighton, SUSSEX BN1 4QA. And if you want to give them a bell, their 'phone number is Brighton 686868 (sounds a bit unlikely, but that's what's written here!)



also echo that well-voiced complaint on the Fanzine Circuit: a lot of computer games companies are very wary about about handing out review copies to up and coming publishers. Well, from what I can see, all the fanzines I've reviewed are bonafide, and struggling to do well.

Jonathan has a couple of tips for would-be fanzine fanatics — be prepared to do a lot of work, and don't be put off by comments from people who don't know how much time and effort goes into producing a fanzine. Also, try to get the ZX Microfair where you're bound to meet some like-minded people.

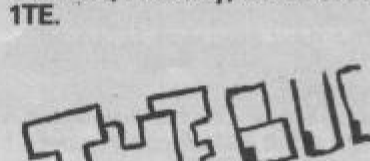
The RAM postbox is accessed via: RAM Magazine, Principal's House, Kerrison School, Thorndon, Nr. Eye, Suffolk IP23 7JL.



And now for a quick update on the fanzines we reviewed last November. INTERFACE is still going strong. In fact, I spoke to INTERFACE Big Cheese Lucian Randall on the while this article was being written (I think he really wanted to speak to Graeme about a duplicator that needs repairing. "Ready soon" Graeme promised.) Lucian told me that INTERFACE is "doing great". Since we gave a mention to INTERFACE Mr Randall's visage has graced the pages of the industry trade paper, **CTW** and he has been invited to lots of launches. (Fortunately he doesn't behave like John Minson!)

The next edition of INTERFACE was being typed up as we chatted (versatile fellow, Lucian) and should be available now, from:

Interface, 83 Lyndhurst Gardens, Finchley, LONDON N3 1TE.



Just down the road from INTERFACE lives THE BUG, and the March issue of THE BUG has arrived in CRASH Towers, so I must presume that it is still going strong, too. I'm afraid the Fanzine File is in a terrible mess at the moment so everything's a bit disorganised. Apologies if you have sent us a more up-to-date copy. In case readers missed the November ish, THE BUG is made up of Jeffrey Davy, Jaron Lewis, Kelsey Lewis and Genia Davy. THE BUG can be purchased for a tiny 25p from: **Sales, THE BUG MAGAZINE, 28 Leaside Avenue, Muswell Hill, LONDON N10 3BU.**

There's certainly no shortage of Fanzines doing the rounds at the moment, and flipping through the CRASH files it's plain there's lots of talent out there. Just before this article had to be sent off in the general direction of the printers, a new cassette based fanzine arrived in the form of TANZINE, produced by Benedict Walmisley — hopefully we'll get a chance to check it out in time for next issue.

Please keep sending your work in to us — it's nice to be able to get a look at the opposition! And sorry, if we haven't mentioned your publication here — there simply wasn't room!

THIS LITTLE PROGGY WENT TO MARKET . . .

The covering letter that came with Data Design Systems' ASTRO CADE collection — six games selling for £4.50 — made vague references to a Mars Bar contained in the packaging, by way of a gentle incentive to whoever reviewed it. Presumably Roger (Gannet) Kean got to the post that morning, for there was no Choccy Comestible (LMLWD) contained therein.

Graeme Kidd pottered off to Halesowen, home of DDS to claim his Mars Bar and find out what it was like starting a one-man software company in these days of megalarge corporations . . . .



Stewart Green of Data Design Systems tries to push his ASTROCADE Collection of six games onto the market . . .

Stewart Green is the man behind **Data Design Systems** — which is run in best cottage industry style from the front room of a house which is crammed with boxes of duplicated tapes, jiffy bags, computer magazines and the all important Spectrum workstation.

Mr Green was one of the first people to scamper out and buy a Spectrum when it was launched, and he spent many a long evening getting to grips with programming the beast. Stewart was on an engineering apprenticeship at the time, and gradually, as his hobby took up more and more time and he was going to bed later and later, he began to think about making a career out of programming.

SELLING THE GOODS

Having written a couple of games — *Alien* and *Bomber* — he decided to have a go at selling them. "I was a bit innocent at first, thinking that the games would sell themselves at £2.00. I took them round shows and sold a few in the simple packaging I thought was all I needed," he explains, "I had to re-think my approach quite early on. I decided that single games selling for £2.00 wouldn't do as well as a package, so I reckoned that putting more games on one tape would be a better idea and allow me to charge more, thus allowing shops to take a better margin." So the idea for the *Astrocade* compilation was born.

Deciding that it was time to take the plunge, Stewart took up a place on the government's Enterprise Allowance Scheme, set up to encourage entrepreneurial types who want to go into business for themselves. The basic deal is, providing you have at least £1,000 to invest in a project, the government will pay you £40 a week to live on for a year while the enterprise gets started.

"It's a good job I'm living at home and don't drink or smoke", Stewart admits a little ruefully, "it would have been very hard going otherwise. I decided I wanted to break into the budget software market — I think the software industry could be killing itself with the £10 game. Budget software like Cascade's 50 Games compilation, has got to be value for money — if you only play each game on a 50 game compilation for ten minutes, then you've had over a day's solid entertainment.

COMPILATION TIME

"I decided to go for six games on one tape and set about writing them for the ASTROCADE collection. While I was programming I was also sorting out the packaging side and so on. All the time I was learning, finding things out for myself. The Enterprise Allowance people don't actually give advice about setting up a business, but you get three free interviews at the Business Advice Centre where they can help with routine matters like accounts, VAT and so on.

"Having decided that I wanted a large package for the compilation, I thought the cardboard boxes used by Beyond would be great — the problem I found with them is that you need to invest at least £800 in the dies to cut the cardboard and then there's the printing costs on top of that. Video boxes seemed the answer — and it took ages to find out who supplied them.

"The next step was to organise some inlay artwork and screenshots — have you ever tried looking in the Yellow Pages for an artist? It doesn't work. There are plenty of expensive advertising and design agencies around who want hundreds of pounds for a simple piece of artwork. In the end I had a chat with a lecturer at the local tech and found an art student who did the work for his portfolio as a bit of experience really. Then it took two weeks to sort out the screenshots, because our local photographer hadn't got a clue about taking snaps off a telly.

TRUDGE, TRUDGE, TRUDGE

"All I seemed to be doing was trudging round printers and the shops trying to get things organised, but eventually the programs were written and everything was ready. The product is fine — it's distribution that's the problem now, which is not what I expected. I sent copies off to distributors and chain stores for evaluation and most of them didn't bother to reply. Smiths want barcoded products, and that'll cost another £100 — the problems seem endless. Most people want to see large advertising budgets before they'll stock a game it seems.

"Advertising sells games — a good game with no advertising gets nowhere at the distribution stage it seems, while a grotty game with lots of ad money behind it is likely to do well.

Sales so far number about a hundred units — all achieved by Stewart himself trudging round local computer shops and offering a couple of packages at a time on sale or return. Which is how Imagine started, all those years ago . . . Is he disillusioned having spent £3,000 and still a fair way away from breaking even?

ALL OVER AGAIN

"No, I'd definitely do it again," is the enthusiastic response, "It is awkward at times but I thoroughly enjoy it. If I did do the whole thing again I'd think carefully about a partnership, perhaps with someone on the sales side. I can see why programmers go for staff jobs with software houses now!

There's more in the pipeline from DDS than *Astrocade*, though. Stewart's got several ideas underway at the moment, including a Play by Mail computer game in which up to a hundred people with different computers could compete with each other in a single galaxy. "Small companies seem to offer the best service in the Play by Mail field", he explains, "and there's still a chance to get in. I'm developing a graphics handling routine for a Play by Mail game at the moment.

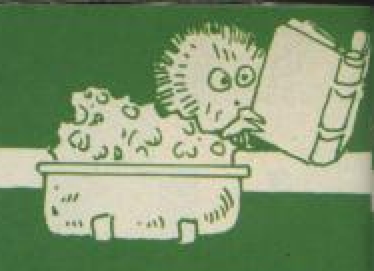
"I'm probably one of the last of the small software houses and may have to go freelance to survive soon — you need a lot of money behind you to stay independent. People compare the software industry with the music business, but it's much more like making films — you have to come up with the plot, the music, everything.

"There isn't much hope for small one person businesses in the software market nowadays," Stewart admits, "if everyone else is small, you're okay but I'd think very hard about starting out now. Last summer was probably the last chance to start out on your own."

"But the whole idea of the ASTROCADE collection was to keep me going while I worked on a larger project. I hope it works out."

So do we. A full review of Stewart's six game compilation will appear in the next issue.

CRASH COURSE



by Rosetta McLeod



SOMETHING FOR THE GROWN-UPS TOO

If you are between the ages of 3 and 65, Crash Course this month has something for you! Usually in this column, the software under review is aimed at children and young people, but the two Collins Soft programs Entrepreneur **and** Numbers At Work **are specifically directed at adults embarking on the business world. These are two in the Brainpower series of programs which offer the user the scope to learn and apply new skills. The adult market is an area which has not yet been fully explored by educational software producers, but the two programs reviewed here must surely set the standard for others to emulate. There must be a large number of learning situations applicable to adults, and the structured interactive approach of the Collins Soft packages, each of which contains a detailed textbook as well as the computer program, provides a thorough and comprehensive course.**

At last a publisher has succeeded in bringing out packages in which the computer and the textbook have complementary roles to play, and which are straight-forward and easy to follow. It will, of course, take the user quite some time to work through a package, but the major advantage is that each user can set the pace, and can choose the areas to concentrate on. The programs are constructed in such a way that it is easy to see explanations again and again if need be, or to 'turn the page' to the next section. The facility for applying the knowledge learned to personal mathematical or business problems is particularly relevant, and the user can build up confidence through increased knowledge. I hope that other publishers will take note of, and learn from, these sophisticated packages!

NUMBERS AT WORK/ENTREPRENEUR

Producer: Collins Soft
Retail Price: £14.95 each
Age range: adult

Each of these attractive packages contains a teaching and an applications program together with a detailed, carefully paced textbook. *Numbers At Work* is intended to remove the 'mysticism' of maths, so that numeracy can be seen as having practical value in everyday life. A variety of calculations are covered, from discounts and interest rates to VAT and PAYE. As the introduction to the textbook says: 'By the time you have completed this course, you will be able to manipulate numbers with the same skill and dexterity as salesmen, employers and politicians'!

The first step for the user is to work through the teaching program which is divided into 8 elements: fractions; ratios and proportions; decimals and percentages; applying percentages I and II; growth rates and indices; useful techniques and the summary of ideas. When the chosen module has been loaded, the user is referred to the appropriate chapter in the textbook and can interact with the program by following the information and instructions in the book. A self-timer option is available, which causes a timing device to be presented whenever a question is asked, and a running tally of the total answering time is stored in the computer.



Cameron, of Cameron Cars fame works out much he should try to fleece the punter, using Collins Soft's NUMBERS AT WORK

The applications program allows the user to apply the skills gained in solving mathematical problems. An employer, for instance, using the Salary and PAYE module to enter information about an employee's weekly pay and deductions, can obtain monthly and yearly figures too. The tax and National Insurance rates used are those in effect following the 1984 budget, but these can easily be updated as appropriate.

Entrepreneur uses the same teaching techniques to help the user turn a business idea into a business plan. The first two chapters of the textbook provoke some hard thinking about the potential of ideas, posing questions about the structure and general purpose of the proposed business, the viability of the product, the state of the market and so on. The teaching program uses a hypothetical small business - selling lobsters - as a model to explain fundamental principles of business - how to produce balance sheets, profit and loss, cash flow, VAT and so on.

Working through the second section is likely to take some time, but it certainly provide a solid grounding in business skills. The application program asks the user for detailed information about the financial aspects of the proposed enterprise using the information to produce monthly cash flow forecasts, a year end balance sheet, a profit and loss account, and an analysis of the results. The 100 page textbook also outlines further sources of informations such as the Small Firms Service and Local Enterprise Agencies, and a useful glossary of business jargon is given in an appendix. Anyone thinking of setting up in a small business would do well to invest in this excellent package.

COMMENTS

Control Keys: these are clearly explained both in the textbook and on the screen
Keyboard response: fast
Use of colour: simple but appropriate
Graphics: clear and businesslike
General rating: both are very comprehensive packages which provide excellent value for money. A great deal of thought and effort has obviously gone into their preparation, and the end result is two sophisticated, user-friendly programs which I would highly recommend to anyone entering the business world.



PADDINGTON AND THE DISAPPEARING INK

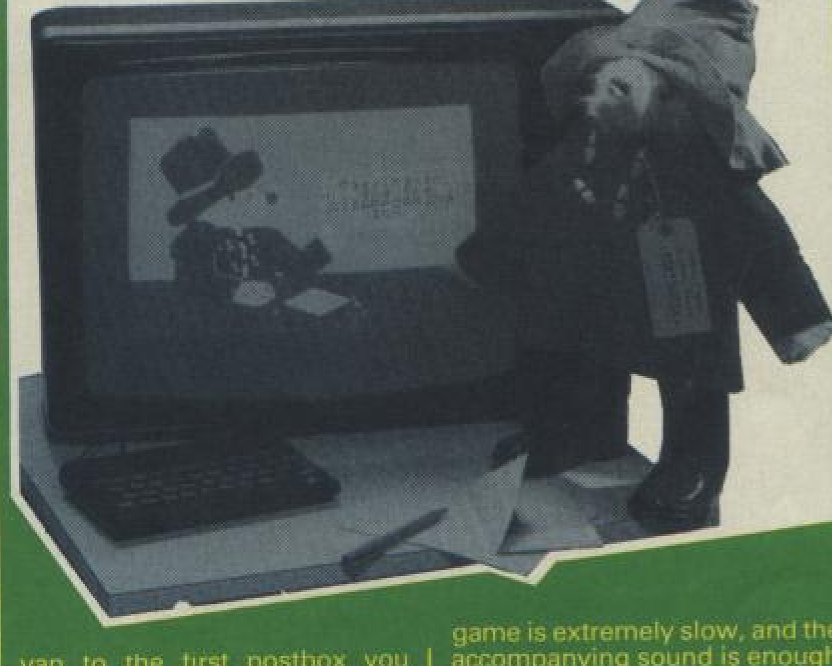
Producer: Collins Educational
Retail Price: £5.95
Age range: junior school pupils

This pack contians a story book and 5 programs on the cassette. Paddington Bear is, of course, well-loved by young children, and they are also bound to enjoy some of the computer games. The first game, *Letter*, shows the player how to set out a simple letter. After being prompted to type in his or her name, a letter to the user from Paddington appears on the screen to give demonstrate the layout. The question 'Do you know what a paragraph is?' is then asked and if the response is 'No', the program highlights each paragraph with a block of colour. The child is then directed step by step towards writing a letter, inserting the home address first followed by the date. After choosing a salutation - Dear . . . or Dearest . . . it is time to type in the message, using ENTER to create new paragraphs. Yours sincerely, Love, See you or Best Wishes can be used to sign off, or the author can conclude with a personal greeting. The best thing about this program is that the child's letter can be printed out ready to be sent if a printer is attached to the computer.

The second program, *Typewriter*, begins with another letter from Paddington informing the player that this program can be used for instant thank-you and having-a-good-time letters.

Having typed in a home address and the date, the child is asked who the letter is to, and what the occasion is - Christmas, birthday or other — if a thank-you letter is to be written. The child must then say what the gift was, and whether it was lovely, very nice, just what I wanted, beautiful, such a surprise , or super.' The instant letter than appears on the screen ready to be printed out if desired. The children I tried this out with, had tremendous fun with the program and were delighted with their print-outs. They also appreciated the humour of the final part of the program, where an amusing letter from Paddington to his aunt Lucy, full of mistakes, appears on the screen.

I'm afraid that the remaining three games in the pack do not measure up to the quality of *Letter* and *Typewriter*. *Posthaste* involves moving Paddington around a street plan in order to get him to a postbox before the postvan empties it. We found that the game was almost impossible. Unless you beat the



van to the first postbox you don't seem to be able to catch it up.

Wordcheck was voted rather boring by the children. This time, the idea is to make as many words as possible out of the name Paddington. Three letter words score One point, while a word such as padding scores Five. Unfortunately, the game is extremely slow, and the accompanying sound is enough to drive you mad! The final program *Peru* is essentially a geography lesson about the countries of South America. A map of that area appears showing where Peru and Lima are, and then the player is presented with three options. If the Grand Tour is chosen, the computer fills in all the South American countries on the map, giving information on the capital of each, the language spoken, and the population. The One at a Time option allows the child to select from a country from a list of fourteen, while Quick Quiz poses questions on the information given in the Grand Tour. I found that children young enough to be interested in Paddington Bear, were too young for all this geographical information. All in all though, the package is well worth buying for the first two programs alone.

COMMENTS

Control Keys: the instructions regarding the control keys are simple and very easy to follow
Keyboard play: very good except for *Posthaste* which is far too slow
Use of graphics: extremely attractive
Colour: clear and bright
General rating: *Letter* and *Typewriter* could be the answer to a prayer if your child hates writing letters! With a printer attached, the games provide for hours of fun, and represent a worthwhile learning experience.

CHEMICAL FORMULAE

Producer: Eclipse
Retail Price: £9.95
Age range: for all levels of chemistry student

By providing detailed information about ions, this program allows the user to calculate the formula for any one of over 7,000 different compounds using a list of 136 positive and 53 negative ions. As well as calculating the formula, the computer displays information about each ion and about the compound calculated.

When the program has loaded, the menu provides the following options: Calculate a formula; Display data on a positive or negative ion; List or print ions held on file and Use the periodic table. This is a data retrieval type of program allowing access to a large amount of information. If, for instance, the first option on the menu is selected, the following informations is given: the name and formula of the compound; the name, number, symbol, valency, and RAM/RMM of the positive/negative ion; the RMM of the compound together with its percentage content of positive and negative ions. An extremely comprehensive booklet accompanies the program giving detailed instructions on its use and information on chemical formulae. A useful glossary of chemical terms is also included.

A vast amount of data can be accessed in this program, tho ugh it seems to me that its appeal will be very limited. It is obviously aimed at the serious student of chemistry, particularly O and A level pupils as well as college students. Its main advantage, of course, is that all the necessary information about the ions has been brought together, so that the student does not have to research the information for himself in books, before being able to calculate the formulae.

The front screen from CHEMICAL FORMULAE, a program from Eclipse that should make any chemistry student's life more fulfilling



COMMENTS

Control Keys: kept to a minimum. The program is menu-driven, so that the pressing of any key highlights the option chosen, while 0 confirms the choice
Keyboard play: very fast
Use of colour: good
Graphics: hardly any
General rating: of limited appeal, though the serious chemistry student may find it useful



INTERMEDIATE LEVEL SCIENCE

Producer: Scisoft
Retail Price: £6.95
Age range: 9 - 13 years

This is one program in a range of educational software packages from Scisoft, and it contains four programs. *Bug* is a type of adventure game where the object is to find the hidden box in Mystery Mansion. The box contains the necessary requirements to keep a rare South American bug alive, and as the insect moves around the rooms, the player must ensure that the temperature does not rise above 40 degrees centigrade or fall below 30 degrees — the bug dies if the temperature moves out of this range.

As in most adventure games, a number of objects are scattered around the locations for use at appropriate times. The adventure game format is a useful way of providing a context for learning, but I feel that in this program the idea does not fully succeed. The instructions in the accompanying booklet are cer tainly not easy to follow, and though the game can be played over and over again with the box being hidden in a different place each time, I did not find the game enjoyable enough to stand repetition.

Plant follows a similar format to *Bug* using the same Mystery Mansion graphics, but this time a rare South African plant has to be pollinated. If the plant flowers before pollination, then the resulting seeds are sterile and the species dies out. The player has to use scientific skill and knowledge to get the conditions for pollination absolutely right. *Elements* and *Organism* are both database programs which may encourage children to improve their skills of information retrieval. *Elements*, for instance, begins with a menu allowing the following options: find all details about an element; list all elements; search for an element's number, symbol, atomic weight, group or form; or ask for help. The search option allows the user to search for an element by name, symbol, atomic weight, group, form or number. The booklet contains activity sheets so that the user is given practice in accessing the information.

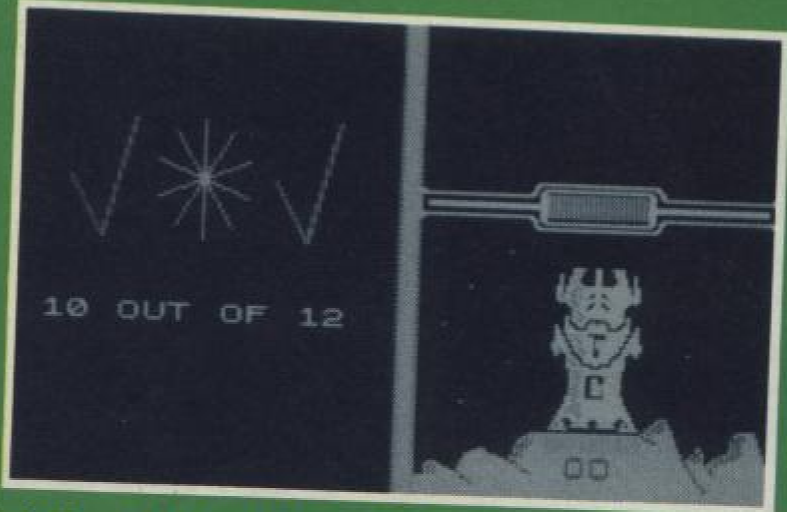
Organism, too, is menu-driven and provides data on vertebrates and invertebrates. It is possible to list all the animals, or find out details about a particular animal. Again, activity sheets are included.

This is a very comprehensive package, which will help children put their scientific knowledge to practical use, as well as introducing them to the skills of information retrieval.

COMMENTS

Control Keys: clearly described. In the database programs, both upper and lower case commands are accepted
Keyboard play: responsive
Use of colour: attractive
Graphics: clear
General rating: good value for money

SCOTSMATHS



Only 10 out of 12 Cam? SCOTSMATHS is supposed to be for the under sevens!

Producer: Technol Computing
Retail Price: £5.95 for tape, £7.95 for Microdrive
Age range: under 7 years

Scotsmaths is a simple addition and subtraction program for the under 7's, using sound, animation and full colour to attract a young child's attention. On one half of the screen is used to display a sum using shapes - squares, circles and triangles - instead of figures. The sum itself is written out on the right hand side eg. 'there are 4 triangles and 2 squares. How many shapes?' When the child keys in the correct response, a piece is added to a picture of a space rocket which is gradually built up, taking off when the series of questions is completed. If the player puts in the wrong response, a sum appears showing the correct answer.

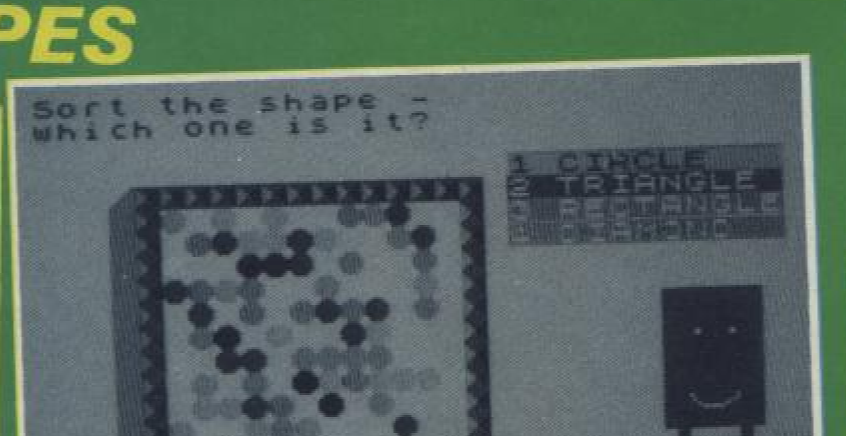
All the sums have an answer in the range 0 to 20, and after the rocket has taken off, the child is told how many questions it took to launch it. The major advantage of this program is the flexibility it allows. By pressing T when the title page is displayed, it is possible to select either addition or subtraction sums, together with the maximum value of the answer. All in all, this is a pleasant little program which children should enjoy.

COMMENTS

Control Keys: number keys only
Keyboard play: responsive
Use of colour: bright and attractive
Graphics: good
General rating: a simple but useful little program which helps young children with the identification of shapes as well as basic addition and subtraction.

SHIPSHAPES

Producer: Argus Press Software
Retail Price: £7.99
Age range: 3 and over.

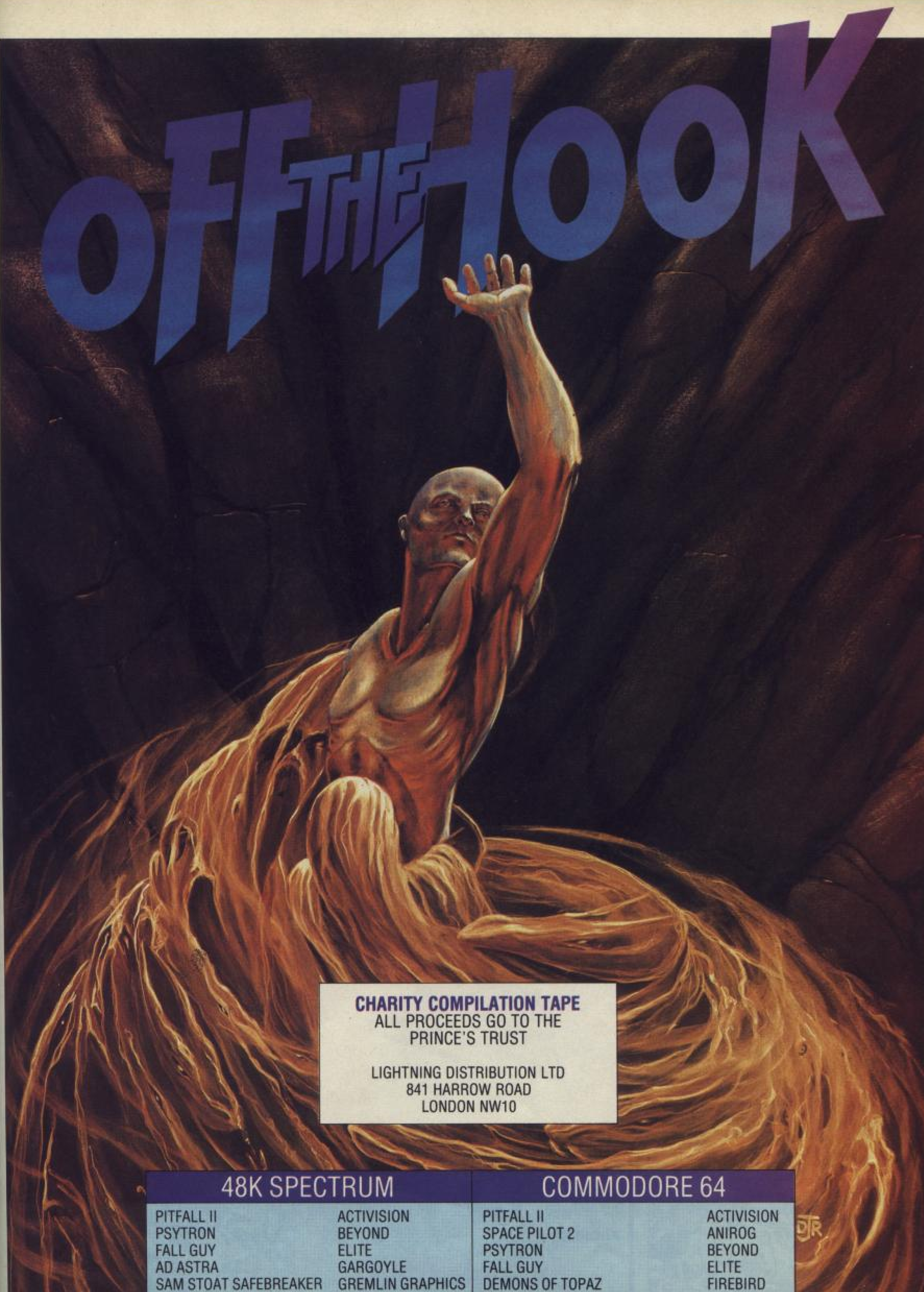


Sorting shapes with Clever Clogs' SHIPSHAPE

The five games in this package are aimed at encouraging shape recognition in the very young child. Once the program has loaded, the child is introduced to four basic shapes - the circle, triangle, rectangle and diamond. The first game *Shape Sorter*, shows a certain shape appearing on the screen, and the child is asked to identify it. *Ship Shapes* involves dropping shapes from a helicopter onto the deck of a ship, and sailing it away. In *Pattern Maker*, the child can move shapes around the screen using the keys 5,6,7,8, while in *Dodgems*, the aim is to steer a ship well clear of the shapes which appear in its path so that it reaches the safety of the harbour. The final game, *Shape Maker*, draws shapes chosen by the child. Shapes of from 3 to 10 sides can be selected, and the name of the shape - triange, decagon etc - appears at the top of the screen. The shapes may be drawn on top of each other making an attractive pattern, or the screen may be cleared for each new shape. As with all the Clever Clogs programs, this one is very attractive and professional.

COMMENTS

Control Keys: kept as simple as possible for the very young child. Mainly number keys are used.
Keyboard play: very responsive
Use of colour: bright and attractive
Graphics: simple and clear
General rating: these simple, yet attractive programs will appeal to the pre-school child, and should help develop shape-recognition skills in an entertaining way.



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SPLAT	INCENTIVE	SHEEP IN SPACE	LLAMASOFT
MUGSY	MELBOURNE HOUSE	KONG STRIKES BACK	OCEAN
KONG STRIKES BACK	OCEAN	BLACK THUNDER	QUICKSILVA
CHEQUERED FLAG	PSION	DEATH STAR INTERCEPTOR	SYSTEM 3
BLUE MAX	U.S. GOLD	TALLADEGA	U.S. GOLD

HAVE YOU GOT THE TIME TO TRAVEL TO SEE WHO?



DOCTOR WHO

WIN A VISIT TO A TV STUDIO REHEARSAL

Twenty DR WHO packs on offer

The people down at **Micro Power** are well pleased that their game featuring The Doctor is now finished. The Doctor? DR WHO, of course. To mark the occasion they're offering CRASH readers the chance to win an expenses-paid trip to watch an episode of DR WHO in rehearsal at a BBC Studio.

In the game, *Dr Who and the Mines of Terror* you have to battle against The Master who plans to take control of the cosmos with the aid of a modified Time Instant Replay Unit stolen from the Time Lords. The Master has set up his laboratory on the planet Riju, where the rare and wondrous mineral Heatonite is mined. The mines are patrolled by vicious robotic guards and contain incredibly powerful beasts, Madrags, which attack any living creature they come across.

The Doctor has been sent to Riju by the Time Lords who want to recover the TIRU and thwart The Master's plans — your mission in the game is to help The Doctor in any way you can. He has been provided with an assistant by the Time Lords — The Splinx, which is a cat-like droid with the power to fetch and carry for its master. The Splinx cannot be detected by the security systems that operate in the Mines of Terror, so should prove immensely useful to the Doctor, who is unarmed and generally defenceless.

Micro Power have arranged for the winner of this competition to visit the BBC studio where the TV programme is made — the winner will get to meet The Doctor in person and watch how his TV series is produced. Twenty runners up will be consoled by a copy of the Micro Power DR WHO PACK, specially assembled for this comp and containing a DR WHO TECHNICAL MANUAL which is a handbook for Dr Who fans, containing details on a whole range of the monsters and evil beings Dr Who has been up against in his travels, as well as information on the TARDIS and other technological gagetry. The DR WHO PACK also contains an A3, plastic laminated poster, a T Shirt, badge and bookmark as well as a DR WHO eraser to take you back in time, allowing you to correct mistakes!

To enter the competition, you'll have to study the two pictures Oli has drawn here and mark the differences you find on Picture B. Send Picture B together with the entry form to MINES OF TERROR, CRASH, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1DB to arrive by 29th May and you could be in with the chance of taking a very interesting trip indeed . . .

A



Crash Competition

Mark the differences you spot on this picture and complete the entry form:

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ADDRESS ....

....

.... **POST CODE** ....

T SHIRT SIZE ....

B



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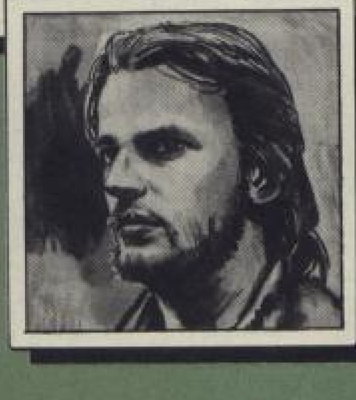
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FRNTLINE

with Sean Masterson



READING BEHIND THE LINES — Some Strategic Retrospection

With the launch of the 128K Spectrum, several software houses have updated popular titles in order to take advantage of its extra memory. Sweevo's Whirled, a single load version of The Never Ending Story and a sonically improved Robin of the Wood were all mentioned in last month's CRASH but strategy games manufacturers haven't made any moves as yet. With the absence of a standard fast storage device, the RAM disk facility provided by Sinclair's latest prodigy is just crying out to be taken advantage of by a good, solid wargame.

A couple of issues ago, I mentioned that the author RT Smith was disappointed at having to gloss over some details in Desert Rats and last issue's FRONTLINE FORUM contained a letter from the author of Waterloo about omissions in his game. Both lay the blame on the lack of memory. Now their games can be freed of these constraints. Of course, the vast majority of Sinclair users will have standard Spectrums and to ignore these people would be foolish. But a good strategy game could be devised for the 128 that could come in multiple load format for the 48K machine. The would really be something to look forward to.

Having hoped about the future, I'll now pine about the past. Good strategy games have been around on the Spectrum for longer than many people realise. Yes, longer even than Arnhem. CCS and Lothlorien are responsible for many of the pioneering titles, being the best established purveyors of such material, but others have made their mark. How many people remember the ill-fated Red Shift, for instance? Nobody? Never mind, it'll all come back to you when you start reading the next bit.

The time has come to look back at some oldies, you see. There are two reasons for this. One is that it's All Quiet on the Strategy Front this month. The second is in no way connected with the fact that the spiky Mr Kidd threatened to impale me on his haircut unless I did something a little different — and he wasn't too pleased about my suggestions for outlining Sean Masterson's Strip Diplomacy in these hallowed pages.

So, here is the first part of a trip down memory minefield. 'Come up with a theme,' Graeme said. Well now, they're all old . . . They are all personal favourites as well, though some of them may no longer be in the shops. Shame on you if any of these are gathering dust on your shelf. They are all good for a few games yet. So here's a Part One of a personal Strategy CRASHback . . .

THE BULGE

This game marked in change in direction for Lothlorien. It was the first title to take advantage of Lothlorien's skills as a design and programming house in combination with Argus Press Software's marketing power. The game was glossily produced in medium format complete with historical dossier covering events and decisions leading up to the conflict, notes on playing techniques and of course, instructions for play. The game has single and two player options.

One of the fascinating details about the conflict was the fact that the Allies made the same crucial mistake twice. In 1940 the French commanders wrongly concluded that tanks could not be effectively deployed in the dense forest of the Ardennes — a mistake which contributed to the rapid fall of France. By Christmas 1944, the Allies had pushed the Germans back to their borders. Then made the same mistake as the French: only a light screening force was deployed on the Ardennes front. Hitler knew that enough pressure could be brought to bear, creating a bulge in the enemy front and leaving him in an ideal position to take the Allied supply base at Antwerp.

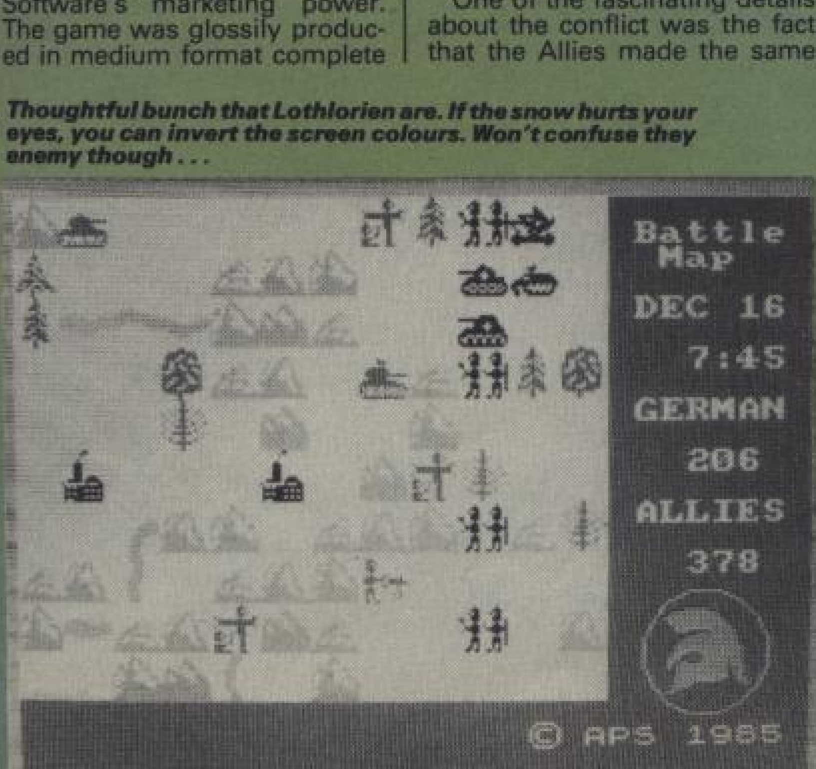
It was a sound basis for a counter attack, but there were problems. General Sepp Dietrich, who headed the advance, said 'All I had to do was cross a river, capture Brussels, and then go on to take the port of Antwerp. The snow was waist deep and there wasn't enough room to deploy four tanks abreast, let alone six armoured divisions. It didn't get light until eight and was dark again at four; and all this at Christmas time.'

The Battle of the Bulge, or Wacht am Rhein as the Germans called it, is an excellent choice for a military simulation and this one is the best cassette based simulation of the conflict available for any micro. The map is well defined and simultaneous movement adds to the professionalism of the program.

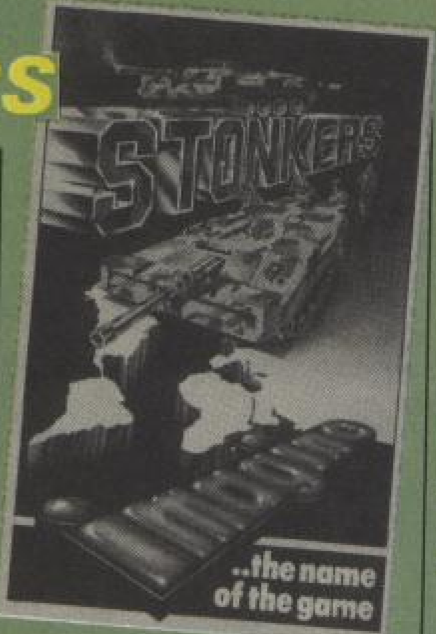
Both sides have to learn different lessons from the fighting. The German problem is mainly one of logistics. They have to move fast to knock out enemy resistance before being bogged down. The Allied player, on the other hand must choose his methods of defence well. Initially, the Allied forces will be vastly outnumbered and outgunned. Only clever deployment of meagre resources coupled with the realistic view that some units will have to be lost to buy time can help win the day for the Allies.

Whether or not a successful counter attack could have brought the Germans victory on the Western front is not in question here, though in case you're interested, this seems most unlikely. Hitler had few resources, the Russians were looking un-

Thoughtful bunch that Lothlorien are. If the snow hurts your eyes, you can invert the screen colours. Won't confuse they enemy though . . .



STONKERS



Stonkers harkens back to the first Imagine incarnation and the daring days of software design. The game can be played either solitaire or with a second player. It's an abstract strategy game where each side controls an army consisting of four infantry divisions, four armoured divisions, four artillery divisions and four civilian supply units. Each side also controls its own port (essential for a constant flow of supplies) and HQ.

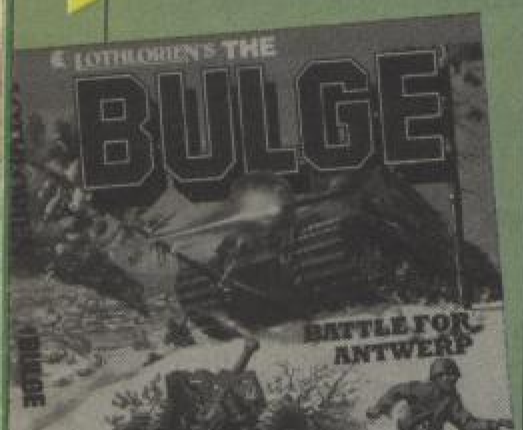
A total war zone map is displayed in bright colours on the screen. A cursor can be placed over any part of this screen and can then magnify the area below to show details of terrain and units. Terrain includes hills, marshes and plains. Units can then be ordered or resupplied as necessary. The objective is to simply defeat your opponent and capture territory. Forces are initially on opposite sides of the map on areas of land separated by a bridged river. The bridge is the only means by which an army may move from one side of the map to the other.

The reason why the game is so good lies in the deceptive simplicity of its playability. Terrain does affect movement, but only trial and error reveal how much. Logistics are fundamentally important to a successful game. The player must learn to pace the game, so that whilst an efficient advance is made into enemy territory, units do not risk running out of supplies too soon. This makes the game a test of both will and judgement and an ideal vehicle for beginners to play in order to realise the importance of different unit types in more complex games. Yet playing *Stonkers* is an easily learned and enjoyable affair in its own right.

Stonkers is a remarkably straightforward game that never really had the credit it deserved. Reviewed back in CRASH No 2, the reviewers, none of whom were particularly enthusiastic wargamers, all found the game to be addictive and entertaining. One of the main problems encountered was a bug which crashed the game every so often. This bug was never really dealt with effectively but given time, it could have been rectified.

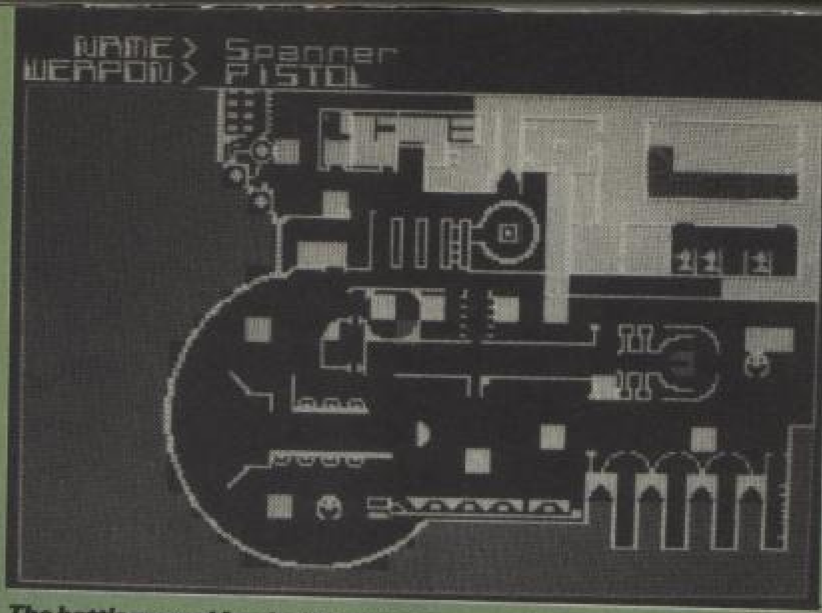


The strategic map from STONKERS. The whopping great hatched oblong isn't an enemy weapon. Press a key and the area below it expands before your very eyes.



stoppable, the rest of the Axis powers were close to collapse and the Americans were only months away from having their first nuclear weapons (though the Germans too, were very close to achieving this aim). What is certain, is that a successful counter attack and consequent capture of Antwerp would have been a serious blow to the Allied war effort and would have lengthened the war by several months.

Angus made this game a Smash and I wholeheartedly agree with him. There are no difficulty levels but the strength of the computer opponent is great and would take some time to master. **The Bulge** would still be an excellent addition to any wargamer's collection and a good game for the aspiring beginner also.



The battleground for the Moonbase scenario in REBEL STAR RAIDERS. Lots of bits of technology to hide behind if nothing else.

REBEL STAR RAIDERS



Now we're going back in time a bit. Red Shift were known for their science fiction strategy series. One of the best of these was *Rebel Star Raiders*. As is typical of games of the time, the program takes ages to load. The player is presented with a choice of four scenarios on loading: Moonbase, Starlingale, The Final Assault and Expansion. These need to be loaded from tape individually and the scenarios themselves take as long to get into the computer as most modern games do. Ah, but these were the days when such things mattered not.

The player is presented with a screen depicting a deck plan of an area of a ship or installation which has to be protected from attack by raiders. A few human operatives and a selection of droids is available to assist. Each deck is different, depending on the scenario, and some were designed to present a greater level of difficulty to the players than others.

During play the defender deploys the crew one by one. Each crew member has a name and weapon, and weapons can include anything from pistols and sub-machine guns to lasers and grenades. Not unreasonably, each weapon has a different effect on the enemy — but these of course, are no more than variations on a theme. They are all deadly if used properly! Once Raiders have been deployed, the game begins.

Movement and combat are handled by a points system which dictates how far a character may move and what courses of action are available to him. Damage is dealt with in a similar manner. The Raider's forces outnumber the Defender's but the Defender's robots are armoured and consequently difficult to eliminate. The concept of the game is strikingly similar to that of a conventional board wargame called *Azhanti High Lightning* by Game Designers Workshop, which had deck plans for an 84 deck space cruiser and scenarios for shipboard combat. Both games are highly addictive, being well-devised tactical simulations with great variety in play. They provide a lasting challenge to the most persevering of tacticians.

Red Shift no longer exists, which means it's unlikely that you'll catch one of their titles on your regular stockist's shelves. *Rebel Star Raiders* was another title which suffered from a lack of adequate exposure when it was released. Anybody with a copy of the game should treasure it — the game has its faults, but it was (and still is) way ahead of its time.

Next month, I'll be taking a look at some old CCS games and one more Red Shift title, *Nebula*. I haven't included ratings for these games, given the circumstances, but for those who are interested, *Stonkers* scored an Overall rating of 78%, *The Bulge* was a Smash and *Rebel Star Raiders* was never reviewed. Until next month then.

FRONTLINE



FORUM

Once again it's time to riffle through the FRONTLINE postbag and sort out a few literary gems that deserve a wider audience. Still no strategy tips or POKES worth reproducing, though. Candy's going to keep his monopoly if you lot don't get down to the postbox soon . . .

Dear Sean,
I have a large number of wargames in my collection, including *Arnhem*, *The Bulge* and *Waterloo*. By far the best of these is *Arnhem*. It came into the shops one month before you reviewed it but I had to order the other two. Are Lothlorien afraid that wargames won't sell in towns like Llandudno?

Why is CCS's new game *Desert Rats* priced at £9.95 when *Arnhem* was only £8.95? Are CCS trying to squeeze another pound out of us wargamers? Lastly, are *Theatre Europe* and *Battle of Britain* coming out for the Spectrum?
Ian Harrison, Llandudno, Wales

PS Why not start a wargames chart?

You know how to fit a lot of questions into a small space don't you? Of course, the fact that you had to order two of your games isn't so much a reflection on Lothlorien as on your local stockist. He decides what the shop will carry as stock, not the software house. Encourage him to get in the kind of games you want to buy. Most software stockists will order an individual title but if you convince him, he may decide to carry wargames anyway. To be fair to CCS, Arnhem *(which I never reviewed, incidentally) isn't on the same scale as* Desert Rats. *The latter is a much bigger game and believe me, it's worth the extra quid.*

As far as I know, PSS are intending to release the games you mention for the Spectrum. These should be available shortly and I'll be reviewing them as soon as possible. The problem with a wargames chart is that so little is released, it would hardly change over the course of a year or so. Anyway, are charts really that important? Personally, I think they can show bad games as well as good and are of no real use at all. However, if enough people disagree . . .

SM

Dear Sir,
At last, I've discovered strategy wargames via an excellent game, *Arnhem* from CCS. I've been playing the game solidly for hours on end. I wonder if this game is typical of war/strategy games in terms of quality and content?

For the last half hour, I've been reading through old magazines in search of reviews and comments on wargames but surprisingly, only CRASH has a regular wargame column. Why is this? If *Arnhem* is a typical example, these games certainly deserve more exposure. After reading through last month's FRONTLINE, I've decided to buy *Desert Rats* as soon as is financially possible — it looks very interesting. A friend has recently bought *Their Finest Hour* so I'm looking forward to playing it extensively.

Finally, I'd be very grateful if you could recommend a few top quality wargames as I'm very new to this type of game. Couldn't you extend your column?
Matthew Paine, Rye, East Sussex

To be honest — no, Arnhem *isn't a typical wargame. 98% of anything is rubbish as an old friend of mine used to say. I'm afraid the same goes for wargaming. There's a lot of dross out there. I can't answer for other magazines' editorial policies but I agree that wargaming should be a more prominent part of gaming in general. In the States, it's almost impossible to successfully market any game that lacks at least the fundamental components of strategy. But there, the market is different from ours. Strategy games cannot be reviewed next to 'normal' games and judged by the same criteria as by definition, they are a different breed of game altogether. I'm just glad that CRASH saw the wisdom in having a strategy column for, if nothing else, it's given me a job I enjoy (and yes, the column will expand given time).*

As for top quality games, you already have one. Desert Rats *should be your next objective.* Lothlorien's The Bulge Waterloo *and* Austerlitz *are all excellent as well. For a hybrid adventure† strategy game, try the Electronic Pencil Company's superlative version of* The Fourth Protocol. *Whatever you decide on, enjoy the hobby.*

SM



Dear Sean,
In the latest issue of CRASH, you mention that the original *D&D* was by Gygax and Arneson. Well I'm just curious but I've only ever heard of Gygax and I've been playing the game for three years. So who is this Arneson?

I write my own programs to supplement my role as a referee. These can create creatures at random (complete with full stats of course), characters of various races, classes and levels of experience and I'm currently working on a designer which will allow the creation of a fully populated dungeon. Why not feature such programs (not necessarily mine) in your pages if you think that side of the hobby is worth covering?
Alex Beem, Crewe, Cheshire

First things first, Dave Arneson was Gygax's colleague and helped him set up Tactical Studies Rules (now just known as TSR). Both men worked on the original version of D&D. Reprinted boxed sets of this game still credit both authors. However, after differences, both personal and professional, Arneson left TSR and only received full credit for his earliest involvement with the company when he was honoured at one of the big American games conventions a couple of years ago.

As to your point about statistics generation programs, FRONTLINE would follow the policy in the rest of CRASH and listings therefore would not be printed. We would be interested in looking at home-produced software, however, so why not send your programs in folks? There are some professionally released programs of this type and it would be interesting to deal with them in a future issue. Watch this space . . .

SM

Well that's it. I can take a rest for another month. While I don't really think any of our correspondents this month really deserve £20 worth of software — I'm in a generous mood. Graeme won't bar me from the tea hut if I offer everyone who wrote in this month a T shirt, so Auntie Aggie will be in touch with you three guys soon! Well done . . .

Feel free to write about anything on your mind — well, not quite anything you understand; just the kind of stuff we can print. It's not going to be T Shirts all round for ever — but I'm waiting to give away £20 worth of software to a star letter writer or star strategy tipster. Send your worthy offerings to **THE FRONTLINE FORUM, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1DB.**


ULTIMATE PLAY THE GAME
PRESENTS
JETMAN
JOHN RICHARDSON
OUR HERO, HAVING SLAMMED THE AIR-LOCK DOOR ON THE MONSTERS TAIL, HAS ENTERED DEEP & UNKNOWN SPACE! NOW HE IS ALL CHUFFED ABOUT HAVING A NEW SHIP, BUT HE CAN'T HAVE THAT ITALIAN BANG-BALL 'COS DAT'S A MINE ..... HOH!
OH, THIS SHIP OF THE LINE IS ALL MINE, ALL MINE ...
SCREAM SCREAM SCREAM SCREAM SCREAM SCREAM SCREAM
WHO DAT?
...THIS SHIP OF THE LINE'S ALL ....
GOOD GRIEF! I'VE GONE BLIND..
GOTTA GET UP FRONT...
NO WAIT!... IT'S JUST SOMETHING HORRIBLE ON THE WINDOWS...
WHAT CUMMIN?
OUH
HALITOSIS IS CUMMIN' DAT WHO!
FHHWEEEEEEEEEEE
WOTS OCCOURIN?
ME GOIN' DIE...
ME GOIN' DIE INDOORS!
JUGGLE
ME GOIN' DIE WITH A LOOKY AT MY FEET!
OUH! A SHUDDER JUST RAN DOWN MY SPINE.... IT HAD CLAWS ... I NEVER FELT THAT SINCE MY FIRST TIME...
I'D BETTER NIP OUT AN' WIPE IT... NOW WHERE AT THE WONDERLENE?
BONKERS!
... AT CONKERS!
JOY!
I DON' BEELEEEVE...
OH, WOW!
WHAT A CONKOID! WHEN THE SHELL SPLITS, THIS WILL BE A CHAMPION, HOO! WHERE AT MY STRING?
SLAM
HAIEEE!
SPLIT!
STRING!
HOOBOY! I CAN'T WAIT FOR IT TO MATURE, I'LL STRING IT UP, ANYHOO!
PRACTICE SWIPE
WOW!
I KNOW! THE GALACTIC CONKER CHAMPIONSHIPS ARE ON, ABOUT THIS TIME OF YEAR, I'LL HEAD THIS OLD SHIP IN THAT DIRECTION!
GALACTIC CONKER CHAMPIONSHIPS ON THE PLANET SMACKEM.... BIG PRZOZEZ
TIKKY TAK TAK
HUP, HUP AN' AWAAY..
HUP, HUP, AN' APHOO... WHO GOT HALITOSIS IN HERE...?
SOON..
HERE WE ARE ON 'SMACKEM'! I CAN'T WAIT TO RE-KINDLE THOSE SCHOOL-BOY DAYS OF SUNSHINE & CONKERS! THE SCREECH OF PLIMSOLES, THE THRUM OF BROWN STRING, THE CLACK OF CONCUSSED CONKERS... BILLY BARKER HAD A SIXER ONCE.... AND A POULTICE ON HIS STRING FINGER!
HOH
YAY
BOO
OUH
WOW! SOME CONTEST!... AND THE LOSER GETS TO EXPIRE WITH HIS CONKER... WOW!



IS THE PRICE RIGHT?

As has often been said before, the games software world has much in common with the music industry. Leaving aside the connoisseur's direct metal mastered LP discs, and the new technology-priced compact discs, the popular music LP has found its pricing niche in the £4–£6 range. Above the six pounds mark the product begins to meet consumer resistance: within the mind of every potential pop purchaser is a set of scales which comes out with a value-for-money readout working on the figures of pocket money/disposable income and the real worth of bass guitars, leads, snares and high-hats syncopated into some sort of harmony.

In case, as a young pop consumer, you think the above pretty obvious, it might be worth putting a historical perspective on this by pointing out the LPs dogged persistence for keeping its token value pegged at the £5 mark since 1976, a date from which inflation spring-boarded. This pegging of the price was not done without some modifications and cost-cutting, most noticably a thinning of the plastic and a reduction in quality which meant people like myself buying three records at a time in the sure knowledge that at least one of them would be a bad pressing.

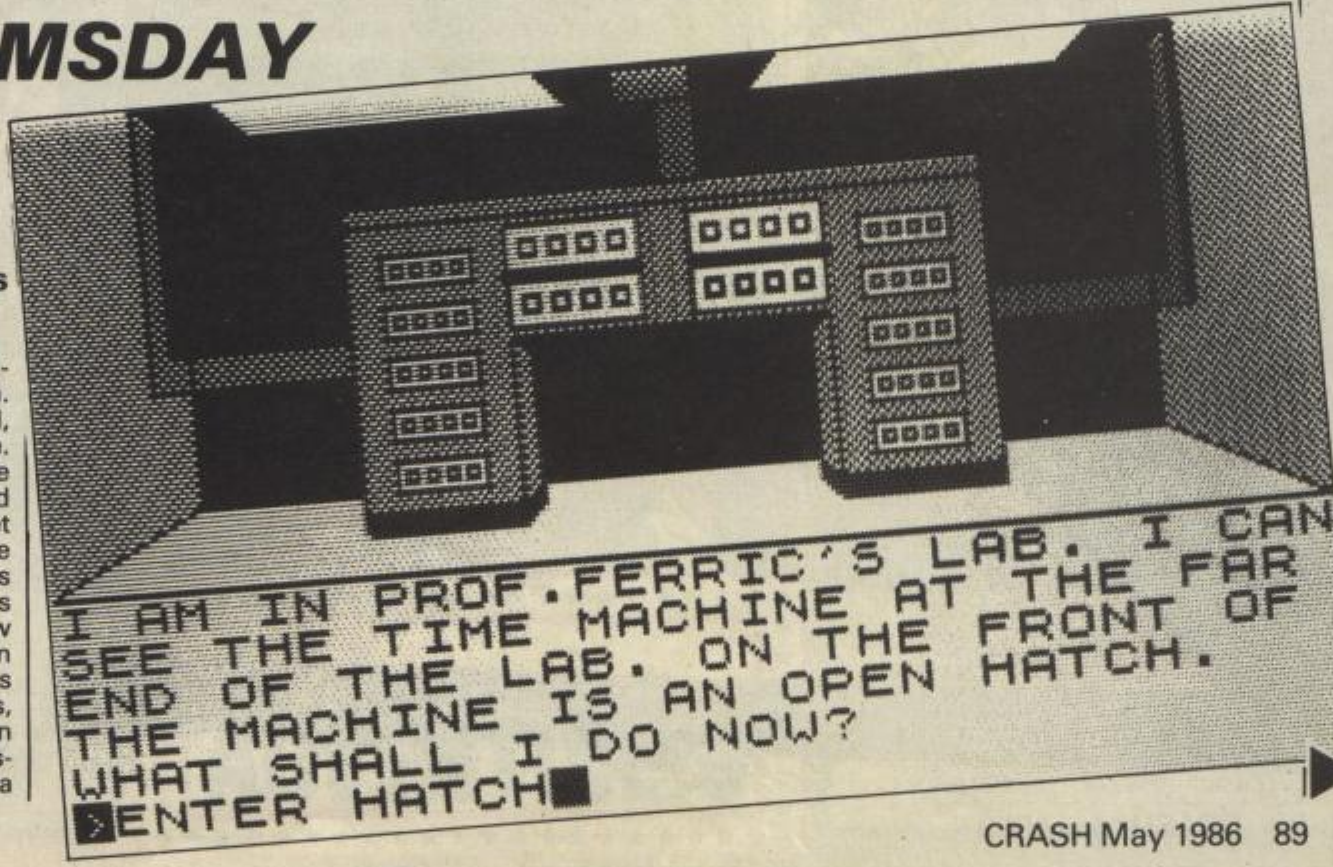
Now let's have a look at what's been happening in software in 1985. Figures show that Spectrum software sales are way ahead of those for Commodore. The BBC and C16 markets are much smaller than the two big boys but are significant, while the third biggest, Amstrad, is continuing to improve and catch up. The most successful company in terms of units sold was Mastertronic followed by US Gold and Ocean. Since US Gold and Ocean are in reality the same stable you might take them combined to be the greatest force in software.

Mastertronic are famed for their cheap software selling in newsagents and petrol stations, though their £2.99 range has recently appeared in the high street multiple stores and is fast gaining a respectability previously thought beyond the budget game. The US Gold and Ocean group are famed for their top quality games selling at the seven and eight pounds mark. To confuse matters, rumours abound of both groups each planning to release games in the other's domain.

A software house makes far less profit, after paying product costs and royalties, on a cheap game when compared to the margin on a full-priced product. A cheap game has to sell eight to nine times more to make the same profit as a full-priced game. But the more expensive game needs advertising and involves a greater risk — kids aren't going to part with eight pounds on a whim. Clearly there are many pros and cons to full- and budget- priced software but what I'd like to suggest is a price for software which will encourage both high consumer sales (with reduced copying), and quality programs. This figure I believe is somewhere around the five pounds mark, much the same as record prices.

THE DOOMSDAY PAPERS

Producer: **Matand**
Price: **£2.95**
Author: **Matthew Holmes**



The year is 3050, the planet Alfa-Ren, the inhabitants human. Earth is no more than a dead, desolate rock floating in space. Just before the war between the superpowers a few thousand people were sent to a planet called Alfa-Ren. Among these people were scientists, doctors and all the other professions needed to sustain life on a new planet. The biggest mistake in selecting these people was choosing a Professor Deemus, an evil, insane, but clever man set on ruling Alfa-Ren or destroying it in the process. With a



bomb which would destroy half the planet if it exploded, and leave the other half slowly dying, the professor represented a grave threat to the inhabitants of Alfa-Ren should he have ever contemplated the unthinkable. Professor Deemus ends up doing the unthinkable, detonates his bomb destroying the southern hemisphere, and now radiation is encroaching on the north. But there is hope. A Professor Ferric is perfecting his time machine. He hopes to travel back in time to before the catastrophe. Intending to search for and find Prof Deemus, he is also intent on finding the Doomsday Papers, the work of some top scientists detailing how to make the bomb, secretly stolen by the madman. Professor Ferric is way overdue returning from a trip back in time and you, his assistant, take it upon yourself to travel back in time before it is too late.

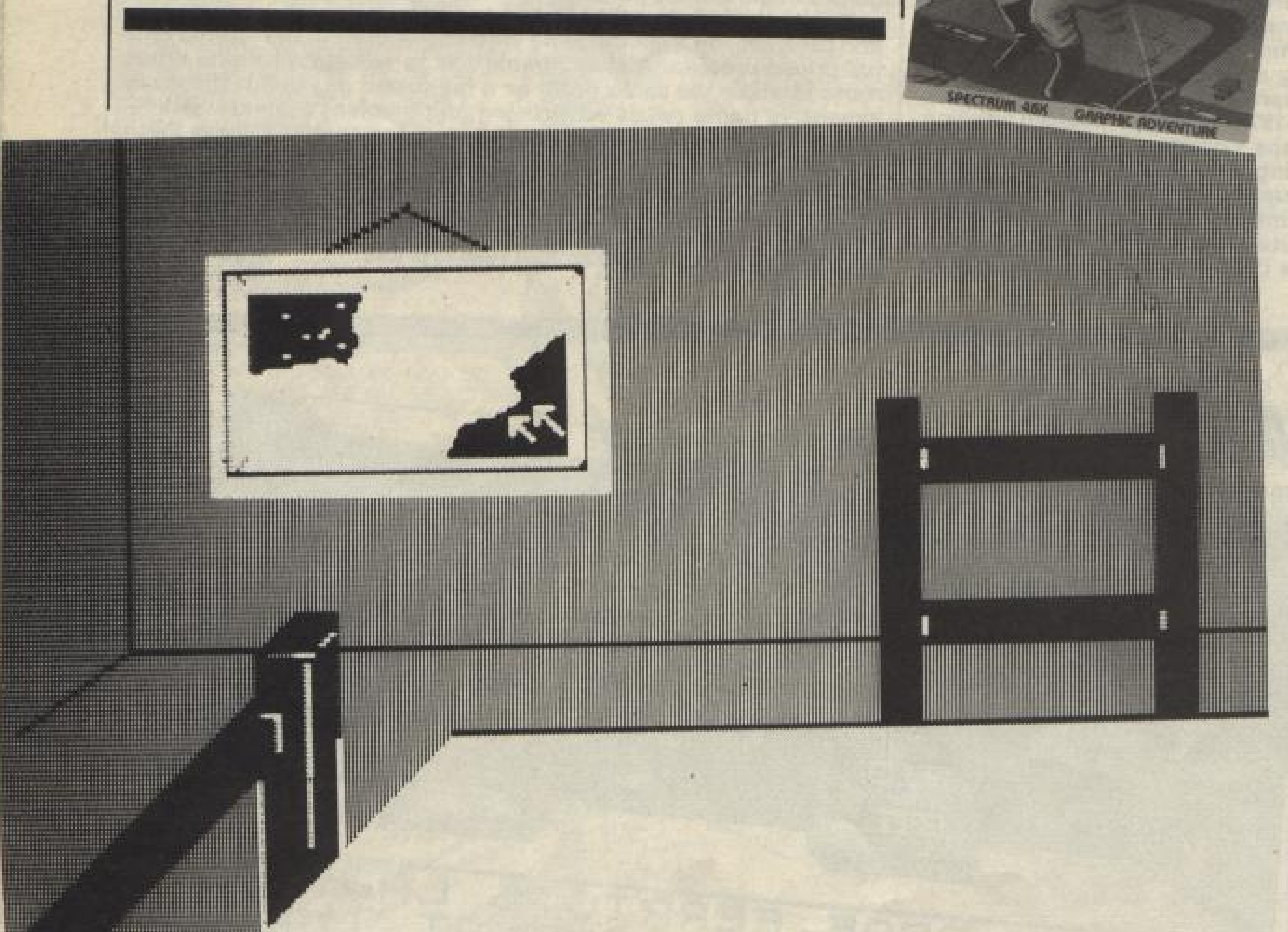
The Doomsday Papers is one of the better programs reviewed this month. It has chosen one of my favourite solutions to the memory problem; it has decided upon a few infrequent quality graphics. I like this answer because you can genuinely look forward to each new graphic, as much a highlight to an adventure as is a goal in a football match. The game has a reasonably friendly vocabulary (let down by the ridiculously narrow -worded solution to the pile of rubbish problem), some super little sounds, and merrily rolls on, perhaps a little too easily. Some of the ways in which you advance are just a bit too arbitrary for my liking, for example, falling down a hole you climb out of it to find yourself in a totally new location — simply by falling and getting out of a hole.

Matand Software will sell by mail order in the first instance. They can be contacted at 29 Moorland Road, Mickleover, Derby DE3 5FX.

COMMENTS

Difficulty: easy
Graphics: quite good
Presentation: okay (Spectrum capitals)
Input facility: verb/noun
Response: Quill
General rating: quite good

Atmosphere	8
Vocabulary	7
Logic	6
Addictive quality	7
Overall	7



PRELUDE/ ANTTEROO

Producer: **Central Solutions**
Price: **£3.99**
Authors: **G Fong, K Murray**

Prelude's story goes like this. Your mission begins in a briefing room somewhere in south-east England. You have been briefed by your commanding officer and must now fulfill your vital mission.

To the east of the briefing room is the CO's office, a modestly decorated place dominated by a large desk and chair in the centre of the room. A portrait of the gaffer himself glares down from one of the walls. To the south is the CO's secretary. She asks if you have seen the CO and of course the answer is that you haven't. An open door lies to the north while the main doors which will presumably get you out of these first three locations are to the east. Now the problem is (and you've been given the salient points to mull over) is how to get out of the main doors to the east of the secretary's room without the following report coming up 'The secretary follows you out. You feel a sharp stabbing pain in your back. As you lie on the floor dying you decide never to trust a woman again (especially German ones!)'. The only clue that I dare proffer is if you hang around in the secretary's office for a while she comments on not feeling very well, the inference being that all the noise has given her a headache. This clue really won't be much help until you're onto the solution anyway so I don't think I'm giving too much away.





Later on you meet a radar tower, what appears to be an aircraft runway, and a stores department where I am sure there must be a way past the wire mesh above the counter.

Antteroo is an arcade game written in 1985 which, considering the age of some of the software reviewed this month, is positively bang-up-to-date. Unfortunately many of the programming techniques are woefully ancient with jerky character movement replacing the very smooth scrolling which typifies the 1986 game. Further the animation is primitive in the extreme with the only notice-


QUESTPROBE
FEATURING
THE HUMAN TORCH
AND THE
THING
by SCOTT ADAMS
with art by
RON WILSON AND
JOE SINNOTT
Can you control the awesome powers of two Marvel Super Heroes at the same time, and rescue Alicia Masters from the grip of the evil Dr. Doom? In this the third of the highly acclaimed Questprobe series, written by Scott Adams, the undisputed master of the art of adventure writing, you have to control both The Thing and The Human Torch in their mission, set by the Chief Examiner, to rescue Alicia Masters from the evil terror of Dr. Doom.
All American
ADVENTURES
CBM 64 DISK £14.95 CASS. £9.95
AMSTRAD DISK £14.95 CASS. £9.95
SPECTRUM 48K CASS. £9.95
ATARI DISK ONLY £14.95
BBC/ELECTRON (TEXT ONLY) CASS. ONLY £7.95



able change being from a right-facing character to a left-facing one. Also, for my liking at least, the second frame jumps in difficulty far too much when compared to the relatively easy first frame.



COMMENTS

Difficulty: pretty difficult
Graphics: average but fast
Presentation: okay
Input facility: verb/noun
Response: Quill
General rating: two very average games for an average price

Atmosphere	6
Vocabulary	5
Logic	6
Addictive quality	6
Overall	6



COMMANDO/ OPERATION TURTLE

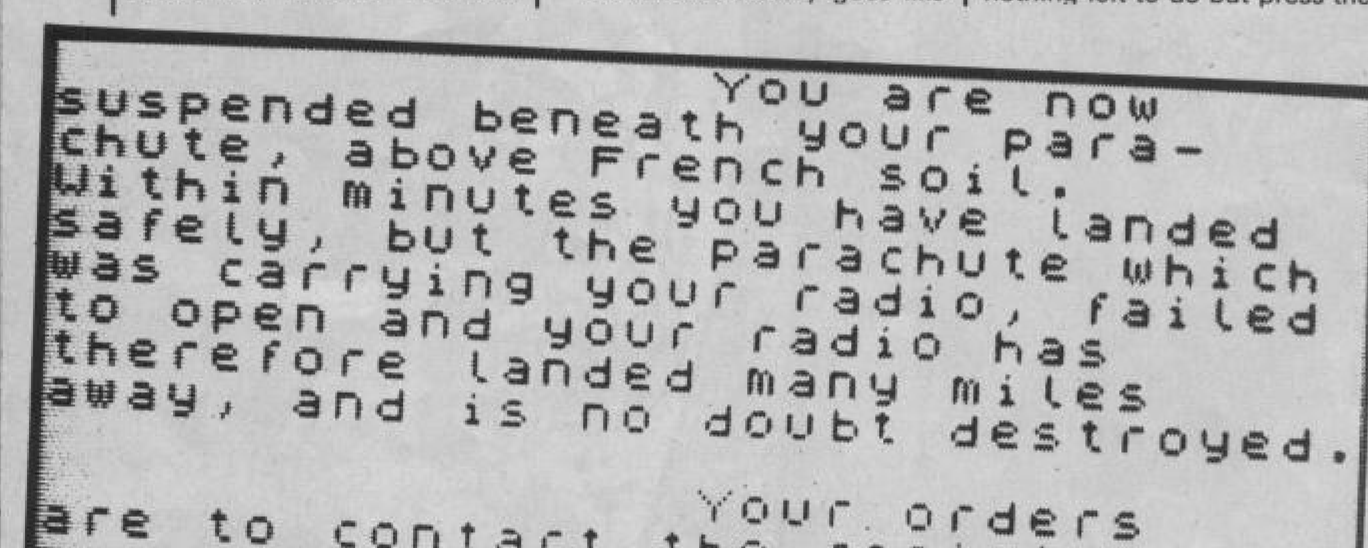
Producer: **Double Play**
Price: **£1.99**
Author: **P Robinson, E Graham**

Here we have Quilled games dating way back to 1984. Both look very much dated products (although only one, *Operation Turtle*, is actually dated) with unimaginative and uninteresting storylines and the kind of flat-footedness which leaves you wondering when it will end.

Commando's story goes like this. You belong to an elite Commando unit, but you have been given a mission that entails you working alone in enemy territory. You have to find a list of enemy agents and return with it, so the agents can be apprehended.

You begin in a submerged submarine where you can see a button, a gun, gauges and little else for now at least, since you can explore no more of the submarine. Since examining the gauges brings up 'I see nothing special' (as does examining just about everything) there seems nothing left to do but press the button, which seems to do the trick. Doing this leads you on to a dinghy which, after much exploring of the local waters and cliffs leads you on to the beach. *Commando* is a game with short location descriptions which is so uncooperative it may leave you short of patience.

Oeration Turtle starts with quite a weeze even before it's fully loaded. The common Double Play loading screen is replaced with the one for *Operation Turtle* and immediately wiped off once you've waited for the screen to load. The fact that the loading screen is poor (and









simply the attributes of the first screen) is neither here nor there — after waiting for so long to see the screen it would have been courteous to at least give the player some time to see it. The eventual screen left for loading simply has 'Opertation Turtle' written on it. So much for amateurishness and let's look at the story line.

It is October 1943. You have been briefed by British Intelligence using recent reports from units of the French Resistance. These communiques suggest the Germans are to develop a secret weapon that could eventually lead to the invasion of Britain. Although the region in which the research is taking place is known few other details have as yet filtered through. As the adventure begins you, as a top British agent, are gently floating down behind enemy lines in occupied France with orders to discover the exact whereabouts of the enemy's most leathal weapon and to report back with the vital information. Within minutes you have landed safely in a small field surrounded by trees in the first frame of the game. Unfortunately, the accompanying parachute carrying your radio failed to open and the radio therefore lies some miles away and is no doubt destroyed in any case. Your orders are to contact the resistance movement as quickly as possible. The contact arranged to meet you will respond to the phrases 'October winds blow from the east' and 'In Paris the winds blow from the south'.

Operation Turtle plays in a very predictably manner. After wandering around for a few locations, characterised by your inability to do or examine anything, you are surrounded by Germans with fierce snarling hounds. This leads to 'You are in a white room furnished only with a single bed. The door is of heavy steel and a panel of buttons indicates that it is electronically operated.' Now I'm not saying the Germans didn't have electronically operated doors in occupied France. What I am saying is that it seems very unlikely. Once again we have a game written way back in 1984.



COMMENTS

COMMANDO

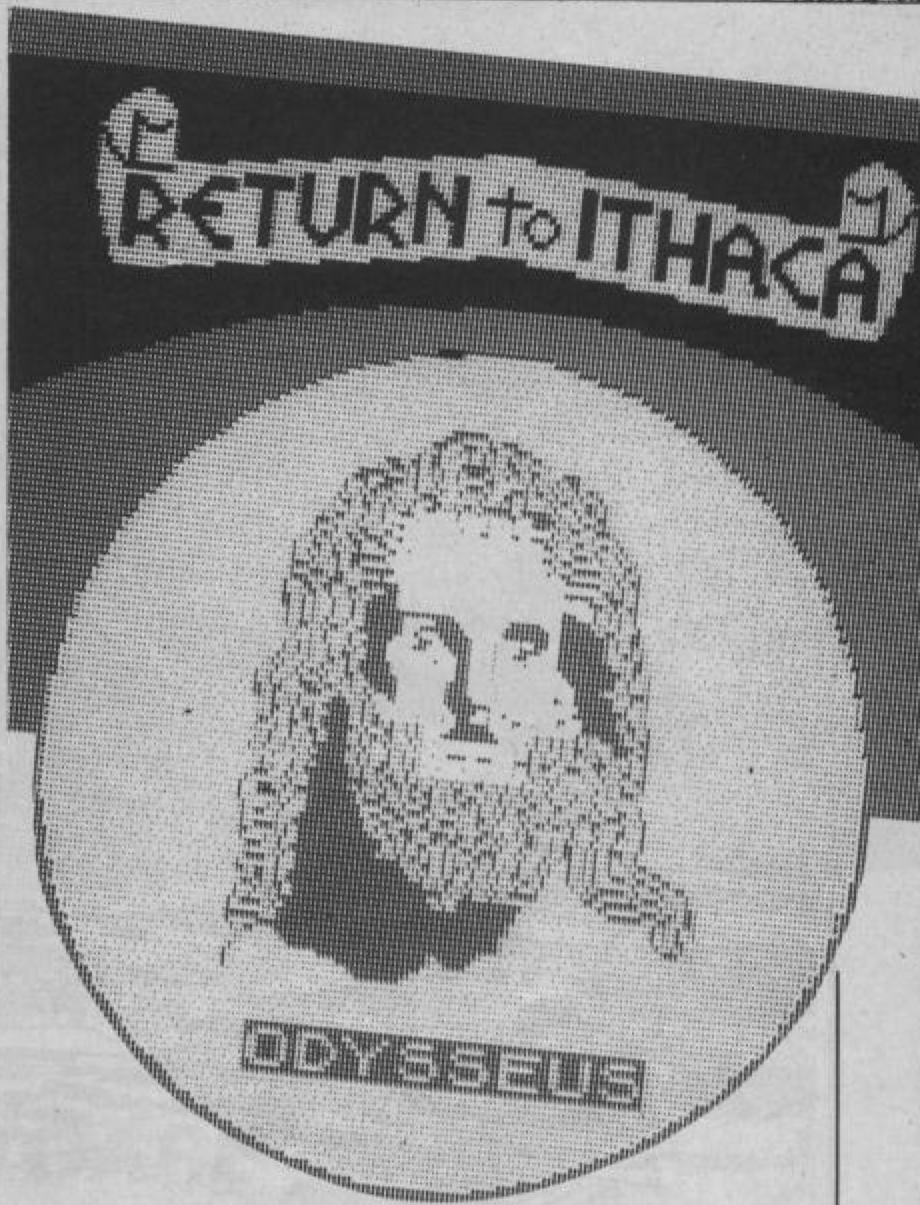
Difficulty: made difficult by its unfriendliness
Graphics: there ain't any
Presentation: very average
Input facility: verb/noun
Response: Quill
General rating: nothing new here

Atmosphere	5
Vocabulary	5
Logic	4
Addictive quality	5
Overall	**5**

OPERATION TURTLE

Difficulty: difficult
Graphics: none
Presentation: poor
Input facility: verb/noun
General rating: hackneyed and showing its age

Atmosphere	6
Vocabulary	5
Logic	5
Addictive Quality	5
Overall	5



RETURN TO ITHACA

Producer: **Atlantis**
Price: **£1.99**
Author: **D Liddle & J Kesson**

Now here's a bit of culture for you. There was this geezer, who may well have been blind, sitting around on a Greek island in about 800 BC, chronicling the kind of tales that led to those spectacular monster films with hideous sea creatures and winged horses, and the gods above playing animated chess with the heroes. Well, that geezer was Homer, and even if some of the monsters may well have been a figment of the translation, the stories are still a super base for an adventure.

The story here centres around the Greek hero Odysseus's return from the fall of Troy to his homeland of Ithaca, the smallest of the Ionian Islands in the Ionian Sea. Odysseus was noted for his courage and ingenuity which helped the Greeks win the battle of Troy. His ten year return home was fraught with danger and he could only win his wife Penelope after killing her suitors.

The game begins with a very pleasant tune and a reference to a 'Beowolf' which transpires to be an anonymous Old English epic poem notable for its starting words or stressing parts beginning with the same letter. There are graphics in this adventure and the first picture showing your Greek sailing vessel is decorative enough. The first frame is of the 'you ain't gonna get any further til you've solved this one' type. 'You are on a beach along which are lit numer-

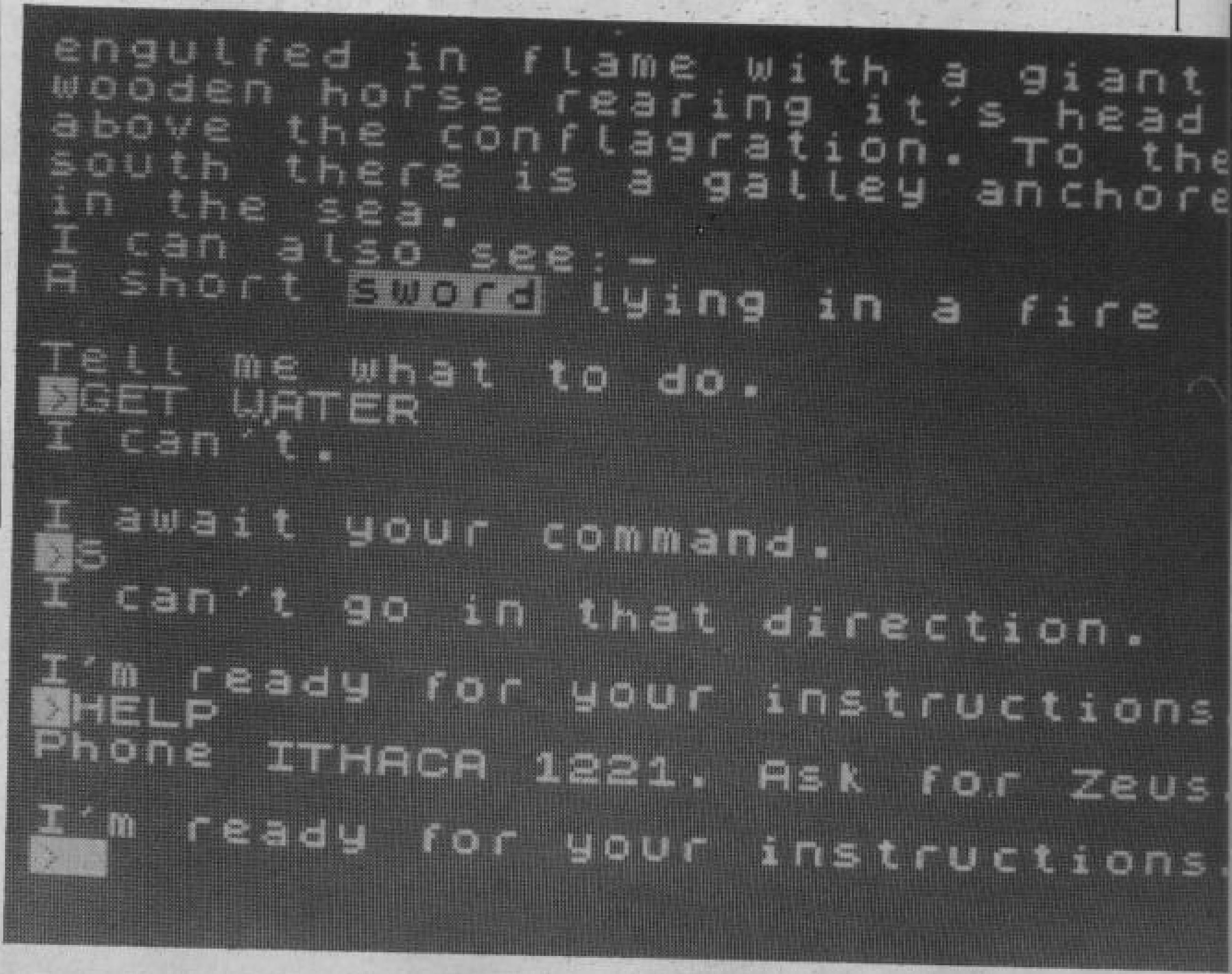






ous signal fires. To the north can be seen a city engulfed in flame with a giant wooden horse rearing its head above the conflagration'. A short sword lies in a fire and you clearly aren't going to get it until the fire is out. Boarding the galley is perhaps a little exacting and is an early sign of the not-so-friendly vocabulary ahead. The EXAMINE command is also far from friendly and invariably fires out an 'I can't' with a mind-munbing lack of originality.

The highly entertaining 'I can't' greets your first attempt to leave the shore in your ship; the game wastes little time or effort giving prompts. Giving some nautical thought to your predicament should see you set sail for the first encounter where a lack of nautical awareness might make it your last. Your first destination is the Libyan promontory of Lotophagi, the land of the Lotus-eaters. This land bears the fruit of the lotus, a stoneless, saffron-coloured fruit about the size of a bean. It has the property of making those who have tasted it lose their memory. If I now tell you that some decribed the fruit as a kind of apple from which a heavy cider was brewed you'll see what I mean about the essence of these old works getting messed around in the translation. There's a curious bit in the first area visited where you pick up the coconut and this is acknowledged by sticking the maze picture of the forest up onto the screen, otherwise it's a straightforward case of picking up the goodies and heading back to the ship. Once the nautical nacks learned in the first instance are adhered to zipping from one area or island to another is perfectly feasible right up to the fifth destination, the







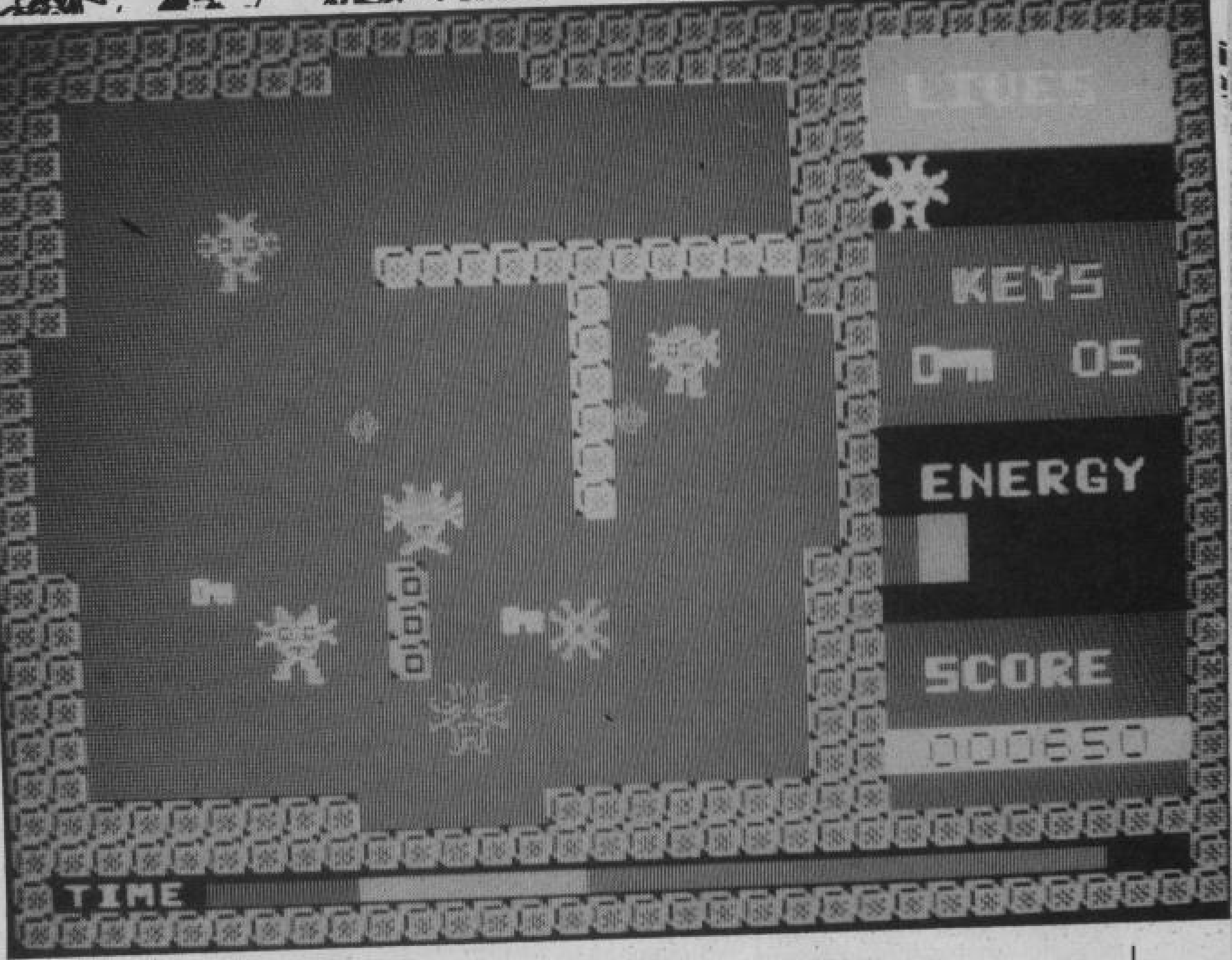
shores of Aeaea. Beyond here are two large rocks representing the fates of the whirlpool of Charybdis and the six-headed monster, Scylla.

I personally found *Return to Ithaca* interesting as I have always been fascinated by Greek mythology. Ancient Greece was a time of real heroes and the enthralling mix of other-worldy events and ghastly, hideous creatures makes both compelling book reading and adventure playing. The programming behind this game turns out to be not as sophisticated as it might but the theme is enough to keep the player's interest.

COMMENTS

Difficulty: moderate, perhaps difficult without a book on Greek mythology
Graphics: average for a cheap game
Presentation: good
Input facility: verb/noun
Response: fast Quill response
General rating: not bad

Atmosphere	**7**
Vocabulary	**5**
Logic	**7**
Addictive quality	**7**
Overall	**7**



CLASSROOM CHAOS/ DUNGEON DARE

Producer: **Central Solutions**
Price: **£3.99**
Author: **Dave Watson, Richard Wright**

If for no other reason this software is notable for its price; somewhere between the real cheapie at £1.99 and the full blown effort clocking in around the seven or eight pounds mark. It offers a graphic adventure on one side and a very simple arcade on the other. Neither are of particularly high quality and I would have thought that both could have been offered for a sum slightly less than that asked for. The adventure is reasonably interesting due mainly to its theme — schools are naturally amusing and the average school day is familiar to everyone.

You kick off on a rugby field following a very simple intro tune. East takes you to a cricket pitch and west takes you somewhere completely different; so much for mapability, or is it trying to recreate that sense of being lost which is part of all school careers until sense begins to surface around fifth form? At the first stairwell loopy Mr Hollyhock rushes up to tell you of some great news. He's just seen a Gatekeeper and is offering £1 to the pupil who can catch it. Now a Gatekeeper is not the school janitor. No, it turns out to be any of several Eurasian butterflies of the genus Pyronia especially a species having brown-bordered orange wings with a black-white eyespot on each forewing. I see.

Before you can get into the act of getting the butterfly you will no doubt be accosted by some pain-in-the-neck like Mrs Birch who will pose some incredibly difficult question like 'When was the battle of Bannockburn'? The teacher looks pretty angry so you shoot out the answer which is . . . errrr . . ., exactly. You're given four attempts at the impossible after which you are slung into the adjustment unit where time seems to stand still and so does the program for a few moments. On your return to the game proper the program rather cleverly insists that you answer this same question rather than some other like 'Who painted the Laughing Cavalier'? It's about now when you decide to get up from the computer and dig out an encyclopedia to find out all about the battle where Robert the Bruce won a famous victory over the English.

The usual batch of loopy eccentrics who pass as schoolteachers inhabit this school. In addition to the curiously academic Mrs Birch there's the daft Mr Puce who mutters 'Heh man, I just got to get some flowers' into my 'still-life' and a Miss Curvey who says 'Non intres in judicium cum servo tuo, Domine'. Even uneducated types will immediately jump to some crude translation like 'I'll spare you detention if you get out' like what I did with the help of my Latin made slightly less difficult and obscure book. Meanwhile George the Janitor is forever asking for his shovel and Swotty Noall, the brainiest girl in the school, asks 'Hi stupid, got any sweets?'

The arcade game on the flip-side is called *Dungeon Dare* where the object of the game is to collect 46 keys scattered about a dungeon. Your energy is sapped if you go too near or touch a monster but energy pills revitalise you. Some screens of the dungeon allow left, right and up and down movements while the platform screens allow left and right only. The curious mixture of four-directional and platform screens can be confusing at first. You are given three lives, an energy bar to show how near death you are, and time and score. As arcade games go this one is very simple, which is not necessarily a bad thing, and it does at least have smoothly scrolling sprites which is more than I can say about another arcade type game reviewed his month.

Classroom Chaos I found to be a very entertaining adventure. Its theme is a pleasant and refreshing change to monster-bashing and it creates a believable caricature of a school. It uses the Spectrum character set (both capital and lower case) and has a glaring white back-





ground on a colour TV but overall the presentation is lively and colourful. Not bad for £3.99.

COMMENTS

Difficulty: moderate to easy
Graphics: small, rudimentary but effective
Presentation: fair
Input facility: verb/noun
Response: Quill
General rating: entertaining

Atmosphere	8
Vocabulary	7
Logic	7
Addictive quality	7
Overall	7

RIFTS OF TIME

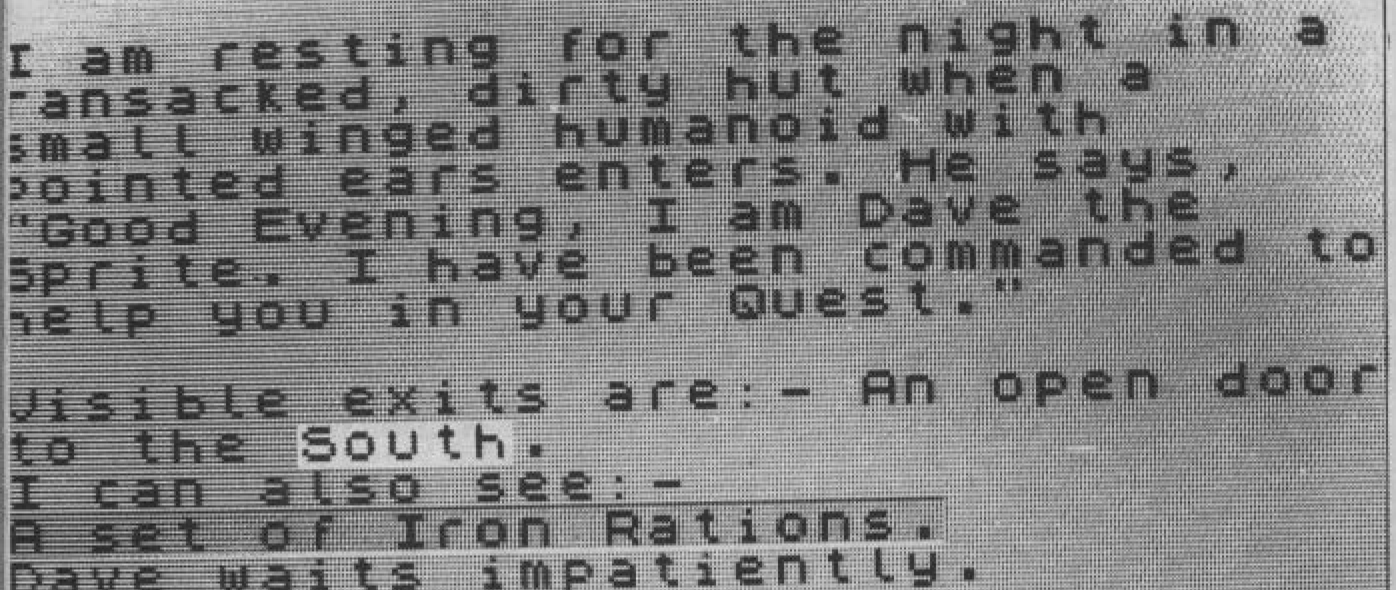
Producer: **Pocket Money Software**
Price: **Very cheap!**
Author: **Dave Walls**



Rifts of Time is a real cheapie, although I have no documentation with these games this time I assume they still retail at 99p or thereabouts. I say 'these games' because I was sent a whole wad of cheapies, either by themselves or with another such on a cassette marked 'Double Play'. This month more than ever a load of games have been dumped in my lap with no help or hint sheets which is bad enough, but worse many don't even tell me how much the games will retail for. If you're confused so am I, but let's for the time being assume one or two of these will end up in the shops and have a look at the best of them.

The blurb on this one goes like this. It is said that, in an unknown world there lie three relics of great power. You must command me throughout my quest in gaining those relics and taking them through a time portal to the God named Odin. But beware, it is not an easy quest for there are evil creatures who will do their utmost to destroy you. All commands can be shortened to their first four letters and mid-points, such as NE and SW, are accepted. The first frame goes like this: 'I am resting for the night in a ransacked, dirty hut when a small winged humanoid with pointed ears enters. He says, 'Good Evening, I am Dave the sprite. I have been commanded to help you in your quest.' Dave is a kind of pet who accompanies you on your adventures.

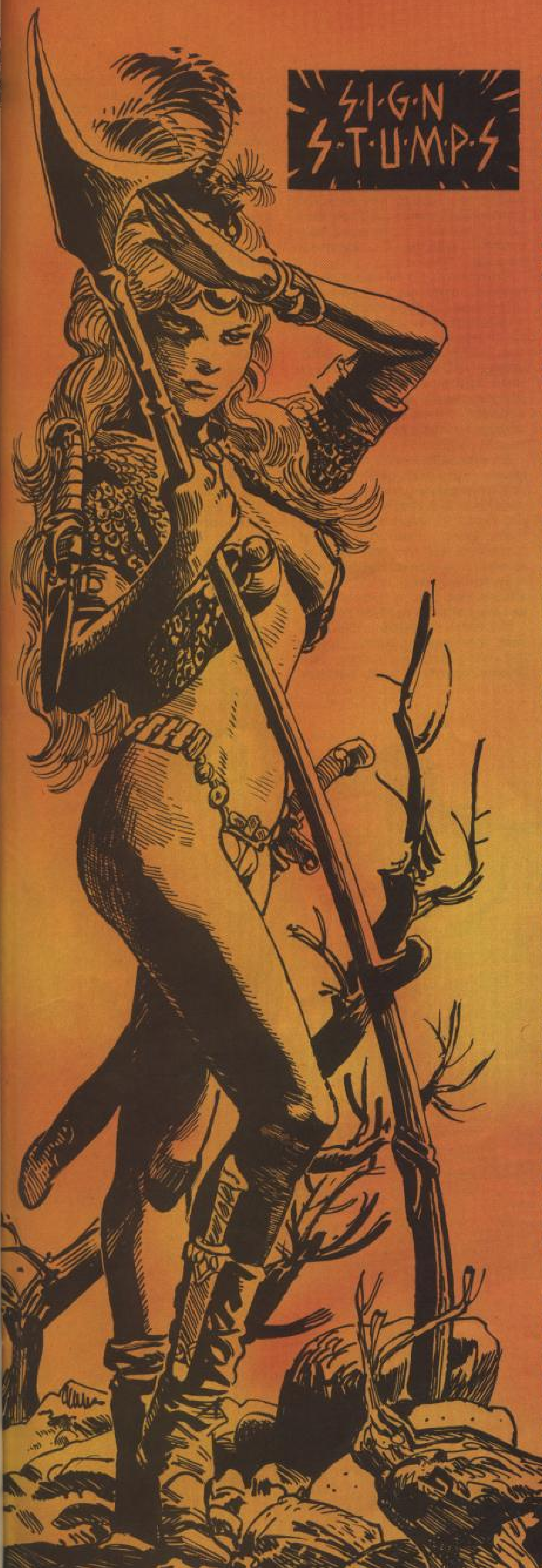
Rifts of Time isn't such a bad adventure for the price, considering it was written way back in 1984. Exits and objects are clearly marked in a manner typical of Quilled games and the humour developed around your companion Dave keeps you going through the trickiest moments. Most of the time Dave comes out with some amusimg comments which, unlike many a poorer game, make sense and are appropriate to the situation in which you find yourself. The game is potted with many a fine and endearing character (some from Dungeons & Dragons) such as a scaly-green water dragon, a beautiful tree-nymph named Dryad who gives you a silver-banded black rod without which you will perish in the woods, and a pot-bellied genie who can't give you a wish. What use he is, if any, I'll leave you to find out.



COMMENTS

Difficulty: easy
Graphics: none
Presentation: Spectrum text
Input facility: verb/noun
Response: Quill (immediate)
General rating: a good 1984 game

Atmosphere	8
Vocabulary	7
Logic	7
Addictive quality	7
Overall	7



SIGN STUMPS

Justin Berry **from Manchester is having difficulty starting the car after defusing the bomb in Atlantis's** Mafia Contract **and is now threatening violence against his Spectrum.**

After you have killed Vincetti's man standing in the alleyway you should TFBSDI CPEZ. You should now be able to start the car simply be entering TUBSU DBS.

On the same game *S Lowe* **of Nottingham asks:**

"Please could you tell me how to get a taxi and what use is the dollar coin and how do you get to 59th Street?."

After you have been to Mario's bar and left via the back door, you can HBJM DBC. Obviously you ask to be taken to 59th Street. The coin is not for paying the cabby, but is for buying a newspaper.

Gary Daviel **in West Bromwich is unable to find the pepper in Silversoft's** Bored of the Rings.

When south of Dart Mountain go up.

Dennis Prichard **of Leeds, another victim of the very popular** Bored of the Rings **writes:**

"Could you please help me in the game Bored of the Rings. I have got into Morona's Caves and cannot seem to find a way out. I have put battery into vending machine and got the coin to give to the dwarf for the map. I have been into every room including the secret room and have got the gun, been down under the carpet and found the treasure but I cannot get out. I have tried finding Rocky, but I have not been lucky."

To find the poster of Rocky, enter the maze and follow the map from the left hand side, not the bottom. When you are at the end on the map go east to get the poster. This should help you on your way.

D Griffiths **of Brecon, Powys is stuck right at the beginning in** Eye of Bain, **being unable to escape from the hut. This is a problem I sympathize with since my review of the game was a month late due to me being stuck at the same place.**

To escape you will need to lift the pole.

I notice from the large number of letters received on the subject that a lot of adventurers are having trouble flying across the multi-coloured desert in Never Ending Story.

You must get Falcor, then go to the edge of the desert and Fly South.

Paul Saunders **is still imprisoned in** Colditz **and wants to know how to get down from the window ledge and how to get past the wall of soil in the tunnel.**

To get down from the window ledge MPXFS SPQF, E. To get through the tunnel you will need the spade.

Stuck in Kentilla, *George O'Donnell* **of Preston writes:**

"How do you get past the stone door and where do you find the crystal?"

If you free the jinni (hope I spelled this right!) in the bottle near the stone door he will smash it for you. The crystal is at the base of the waterfall.

On the same game, *Gideon Overhead* **from Watford wants to know where he can find the silver chalice.**

It's inside the black sack you find in the Urga-Mauls Treasure room.

After 16 months of play *D Earnshaw* **of Lancashire has reached Grako's lair but is unable to banish him.**

If you have talked to the Carawood Oracle you will know that you need Velnor's staff to defeat Grako and that he (it) cannot be defeated in combat. As the staff was the source of Velnor's power he is drawn closer to Earth from the plain of Hell each time the staff is used. You will notice the clawing figure when you use the staff. On the fourth use of the staff Velnor will reach Earth and drag the staff and its wielder back to Hell. Hence, to return the demon Grako back from whence he came, use the staff three times and then give it to Grako.

G Lacey **from Burton-on-Trent is unable to get through the dark window in** Fantasia Diamond.

You need to SVC HMBTT.

In Witch's Cauldron, *Laurie Brown* **of Scotland is having difficulty finding some moonshine for the next spell.**

I think you are looking for the wrong thing. Moonshine is an American word for illegally distilled whisky!

ENCRYPTION CORNER

It's easy to speak Brewster!

ENGLISH:	ZABCDEFGHIJKL
BREWSTER:	ABCDEFGHIJKLM
ENGLISH:	MNOPQRSTUVWXY
BREWSTER:	NOPQRSTUVWXYZ

DON'T WRITE OFF THE QUILL

Dear Derek,
I am writing to you on the subject of so called 'State-of-the-art' games vs normal text/graphic adventures. For about two years now the 'State-of-the-art' format has been flooding the market. These so-called breakthroughs are priced astronomically high and usually contain either 3D graphics (landscaping etc) or large split-screen graphics (Level 9).

While I have no doubt as to the calibre of these games (Sherlock is my favourite adventure) I still gain immense pleasure from other, simpler formats.

Although people criticise the Quill system, some of the games written on it are incredibly addictive and fun to play (Mafia Contract being a good example). But despite this, companies continue to reject games just because they are written on The Quill, even with The Patch (Mastertronic won't accept Quilled games and look at their adventure releases, hardly SMASHES were they)?

I still play Espionage Island and Eye of Bain, and enjoy them, but Sorderon's Shadow and Red Moon have long since been resolved or rejected.

So come on Derek, don't reduce ratings just because the game is Quilled or text-only. If it is addictive, rate it as so!

Marc Stears
South Glamorgan

There's no shortage of Quilled games being released, just look at this month's reviews! The problem may come in finding them in the shops. As far as my ratings are concerned, I do look at how addictive the game is and not just how pretty the pictures are. But it must be said that many are poorly designed.

DB

PASSING OVER THE PRETTIES

Dear Derek,
I was surprised to read in the February issue that software houses don't accept text-only adventures. Lord of the Rings, Melbourne House's excellent new adventure game, doesn't contain very many graphic screens. So far, on tape one, I have only seen three pictures and they aren't exactly works of art. The only good bit of graphics are the pictures of the hobbits' faces. I think Lord of the Rings would have been just as good without any graphics. In some adventure games it is a nuisance waiting for the picture to be drawn time and time again and, anyway, you get sick of seeing it! Games like Lords of Midnight have fantastic graphics but not much game to them.

Richard Matthews
Huntingdon

I agree, but what you and I think matter nought. People vote with their money and it appears they've voted for graphics so that's what we've got. Maybe if in this country we'd had disc drives and been able to run top quality adventures like the Infocom series things would have been different.

DB

DRAGGING DOWN DUNGEONS

Dear Derek,
I am concerned.

Why? Because it seems to me that Swords & Sorcery is being hailed as a great, nay, brilliant game. The game, in fact, that comes closest to bringing the world of D&D to the computer screen.

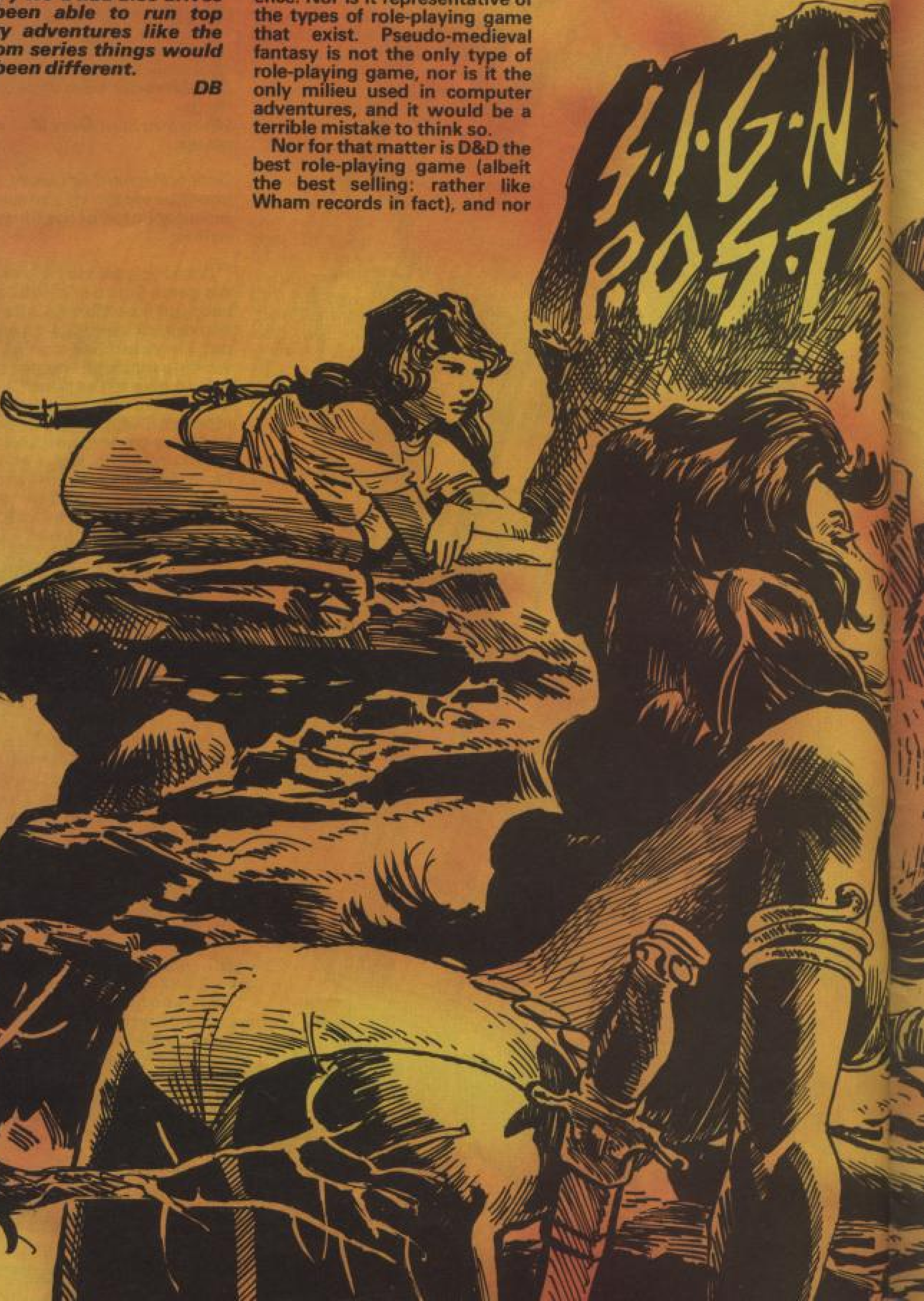
Being a player of role-playing games and also computer adventures I suspect that I have a different view to many ecstatic reviewers. Firstly, the view that S&S succeeds well at emulating D&D shows basically a total ignorance of what role-playing games are really about, and also, a moderate ignorance of what makes a good computer game.

As you may well know, Dungeons and Dragons is not the only role-playing game in existence. Nor is it representative of the types of role-playing game that exist. Pseudo-medieval fantasy is not the only type of role-playing game, nor is it the only milieu used in computer adventures, and it would be a terrible mistake to think so.

Nor for that matter is D&D the best role-playing game (albeit the best selling: rather like Wham records in fact), and nor is it the worst. It is however many years out of date. Role-playing is not about mindlessly slaying an insane menagerie of satanic goblins and dragons (despite its unfortunate media image). Roleplaying is about creating a participation novel (or play if you prefer) and naturally is only limited by the imagination of those who play it.

So who in their right mind would think that it is possible to simulate D&D electronically? The same sort of people are cashing in on the current fad for fantasy games via bendy toy goblins and solo fantasy gamebooks; may it end soon and give us serious gamers some peace.

S&S may well have been created with good intentions, but I am sorry to say that it fails miserably. The money would be better spent on a real role-playing game, unless of course, your Spectrum has ruined your



need for socialising.

On another tack and replying to John Rundle, the instructions for Sorderon's Shadow DO state that the tape will be VERIFIED after saving; this can be aborted with BREAK. To say to anybody a fairly long sentence, just type the sentence in quotes, omitting the say to person'.

Brian Duguid
Turriff
Aberdeenshire.

S&S takes many of its ideas for combat and problems from D&D and as such is at present the closest computer game to D&D. Obviously there can't be any real level of role-playing in a solo adventure on a small home micro, but what is being judged in a review is the game itself not its similarity to any other product. Your criticism comes purely from the fact that it compares itself with your beloved role-playing games. Would you really have been so critical of S&S if it hadn't?

DB

DESIGNER'S BLOCK?

Dear Sir,
I am thinking of trying to write an adventure and would like some advice about where to find ideas for scenarios. Also, could you give me some general guidelines about designing an adventure, eg which commands to include, how to organise the plot and so on.

It is not so much help with the actual programming I need, as advice on design of adventure.

Suzi Yann
Dudley
West Midlands

To be really honest I would say that if you don't have a clear idea of what you want to do then don't bother. Anyway, ignoring that rather negative response you could look to books like Lord of the Rings *or* Chronicles of Thomas Covanent *for inspiration (many adventures have plundered the ideas in these works). Any good fantasy or SciFi book should be full of rich imagery and of course films are good for graphic ideas. Don't forget role-playing magazines like* White Dwarf *as well. The most important point however is to collect up your ideas before you start programming. If you haven't spent at least a month designing the game before you sit down at the computer you should be asking yourself whether you really have done enough. Anyway, I should be writing an article on this very subject within the next couple of months, so if you're still stuck . . .*

DB

BEYOND BEYOND CRITICISM

Dear DB,
I am writing to defend both Sorderon's Shadow and Beyond. First let me say that just over a year ago Beyond were being praised for great games such as Lords of Midnight, Doomdark's Revenge, Shadowfire and so on, all of which left other software houses standing. So why knock them now as in my mind Sorderon's Shadow is far better than most megagames out at the moment, for example Lord of the Rings, which, when you look at it, is just a complex maze. Once you have got to Bree it's just a case of follow Strider to the end. The second program is just a maze!

But with SS you get a whole land to walk in, artificial intelligence and some fantastic graphics by Denton Designs, not to mention the 750 word vocabulary and 14 page booklet. As for Beyond themselves, what other software company offer a free backup club with a news letter full of tips, or even a tuner to expand their original game (the Shadowfire tuner)?

Sorry to go on but if John Rundle takes time to look at the skill in SS and the plot, it is far from the 'worst program I've ever played' category. As for your comment on the standard of programs falling I ask you to name me a program that can come anywhere near Enigma Force!!

Jeff Rogers
Oldbury
West Midlands.

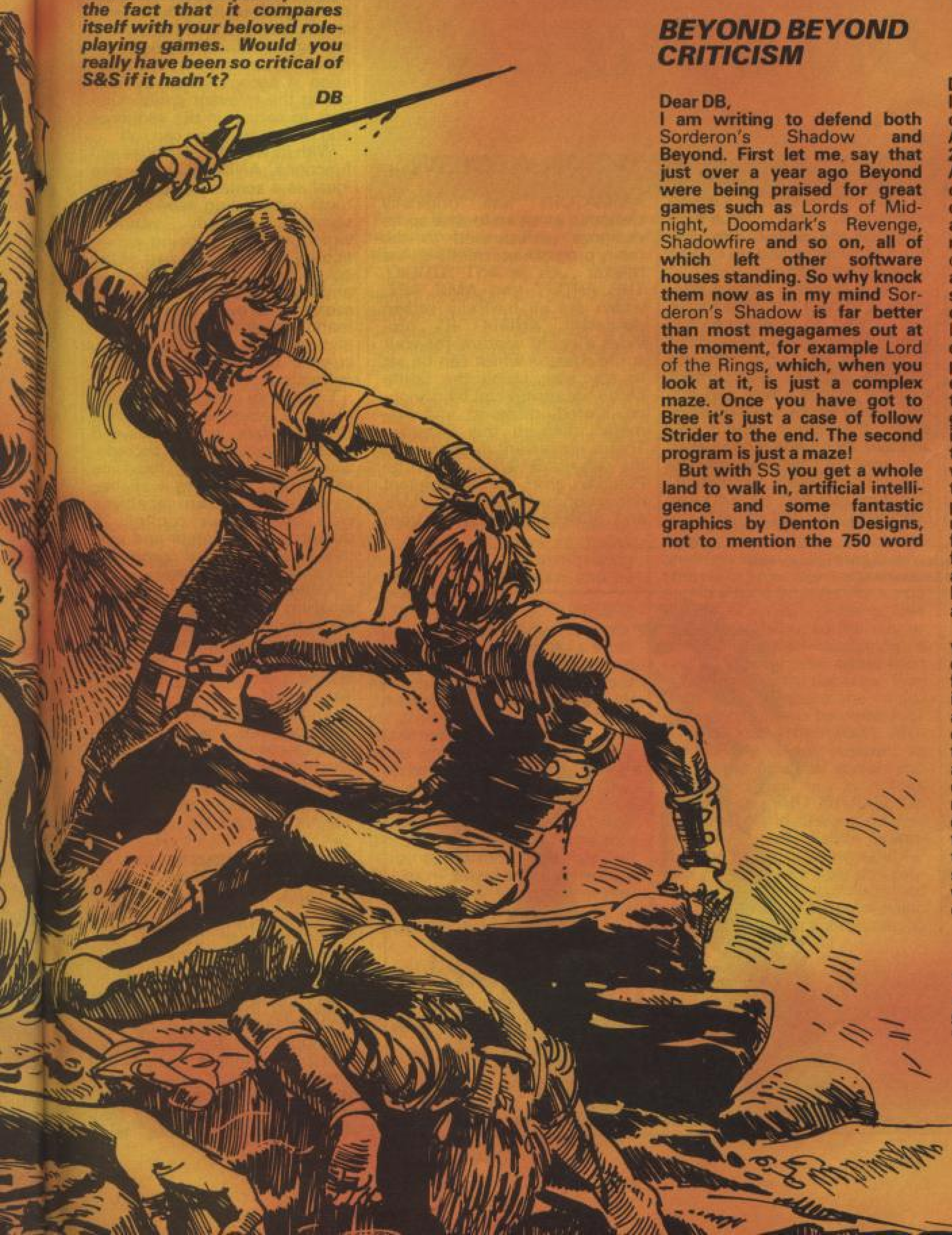
Must admit I found Sorderon's Shadow *boring, but Beyond have one of the best records for quality of any software house and I certainly look forward to seeing their next releases.*

Dear Derek,
I am writing concerning a couple of points raised in your Adventure Trail letters of issue 26. The first is that Mike Arnatov's observations concerning the effect that a game's complexity can have on playability certainly hit home with me. I have been playing Doomdark's Revenge for some time and feel that the program shows Mike Singleton's development as a programmer since Lords of Midnight. However, despite this, although I enjoy playing Revenge, the level of enjoyment is not as great as in the earlier game. Mike's suggestion that the amount of information/factors that need to be absorbed is too great is very perceptive. This often leads to rushed and consequently poor decisions. The discipline needed to play the game to its full depth obviously detracts from the feeling of fast moving adventure that exists in Lords of Midnight and many other adventures.

Secondly, I cannot agree with your assertion that the standard of Beyond software is steadily falling. Rather, I think that the increase in quality has not been as great as that achieved by other publishers. It seems to me that Beyond and Ultimate have attracted the lion's share of criticism for their products in recent months. It is no coincidence that during the period of 1984 through to the first half of 1985, the standard of software released by these two companies was consistently better than offered by the opposition.

Jeremy Cracknell
Kent

This month's £20 prize (wowee, Good ol' Graeme!) goes to Marc Stears in South Glamorgan.



TECH NICHE



GETTING THINGS MOVING ON SCREEN

A brand new utility arrived in the office, and FRANCO FREY had some fun moving things round his Spectrum's screen . . .
THE ANIMATOR, from Softcat Micros:

ART STUDIO has been living the high life amongst the latest crop of drawing utilities. It seemed nothing could really match it for elegance and ease of use, plethora of facilities and up to date software technology.

Now a program from a relatively unknown software house has arrived to challenge that very position. ANIMATOR1 from Softcat Micros claims to be the ultimate graphics development tool for programmers and artists. In one fell swoop it brushes aside the fancy icon-come-window technique and makes the use of the fashionable mouse completely redundant. Can it be that ART STUDIO has been so quickly dethroned?

THE INGREDIENTS

ANIMATOR1 was originally designed as an up to date sprite designer as opposed to the many programs currently on the market such as ART STUDIO, THE ARTIST and AMX ART, which are all basically screen designers. ANIMATOR1 provides a sprite window for your sprite designs which can be set to any size. Using the Sprite Menu the sprites can be designed, stored, retrieved and animated through this window. This is equivalent in concept to the defunct PAINT program by Procom and its subsequent derivations such as PAINT PLUS and SCREEN DESIGNER from Print'n'Plotter, but ANIMATOR1 is far more flexible.

Any sprite size can be selected and the number of frames is limited only by the size of memory in combination with the size of your sprite(s). Sprites can be saved in BASIC or machine code format, and the BASIC driver program is unprotected and 'hackable'. The whole screen can be used as a sprite sketch pad, so individual frame stages can be drawn side by side and saved individually by specifying the sprite number. Animation is accomplished by indicating the relevant sprite numbers to appear in the sequence and the sprite action can roll.

With its wealth of facilities and functions, ANIMATOR1 is also ideal as a screen designer. The most outstanding aspect is the versatile magnify window, which apart from being set on and off displays any part of the screen and can be relocated anywhere 'out of the way' on the screen. It is even active in animation mode, so detailed animation work can be viewed concurrent to the normal sprite animation.

For screen design there is an amazing amount of facilities. Paint brushes, air brushes and hatches (textures) can be redesigned, elastic fast tag, fixed line and circle modes are available, as well as shade paint capability, walk over colour control, 25 different scroll, rotate and mirrors and stretch and compression of the whole screen.

ANIMATOR1 features an amazing text print facility. It prints text in any size, shape and angle by distorting the character set. The text can be located by seizing it and moving it around like a brush.

Character sets and UDG's can be designed together with hatches, paint brushes and air brushes using the Design Menu. Up to 15K of memory is available.

Two Tone Woman. An artistic creation lovingly dumped to a dot matrix printer by our very own Leonardo Da Frey!

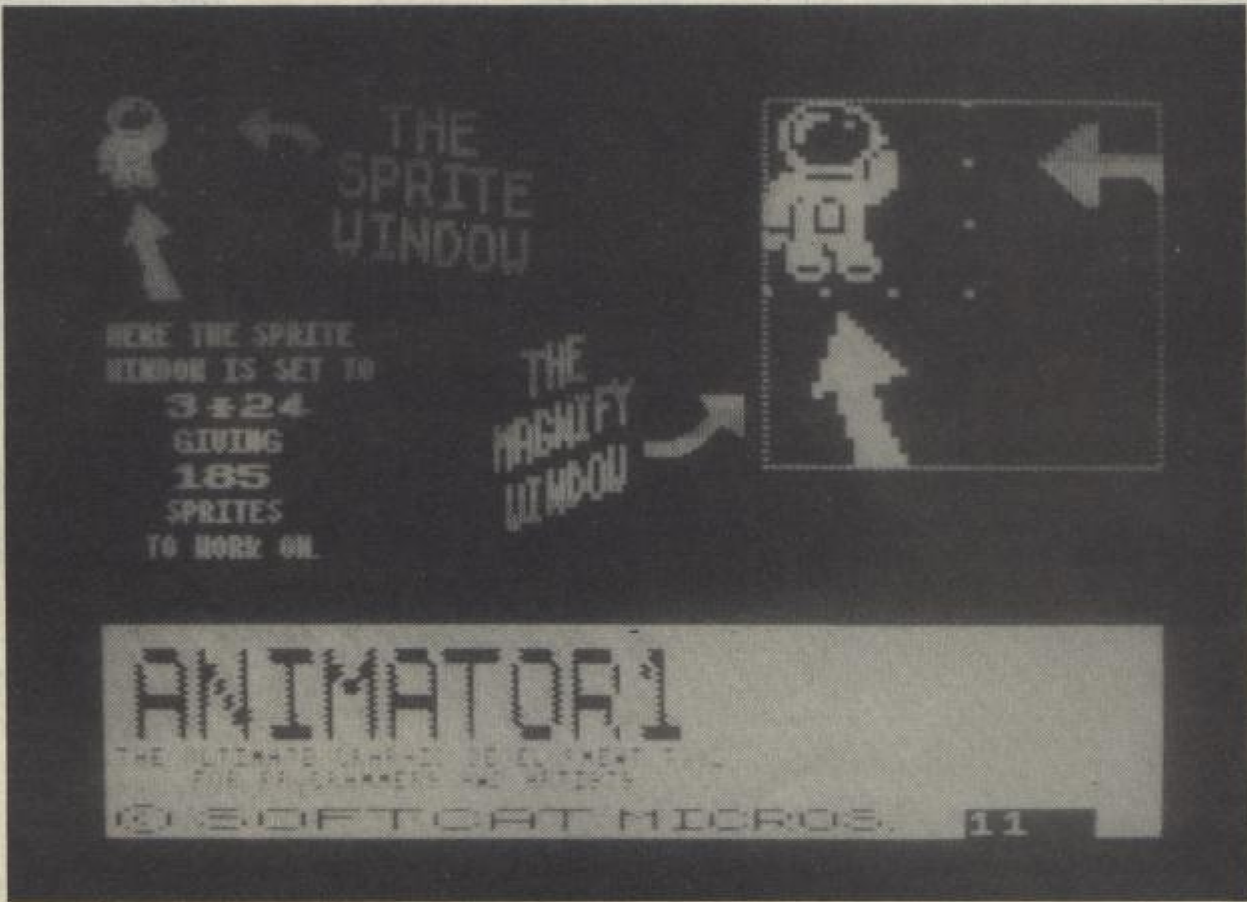


THE RECIPE

All functions are controlled using the keyboard. This means memorising all the key sequences necessary to perform the various activities. Full use is made of the keyboard shift facilities and the commands are grouped by function under the individual shift 'families'. The V shift group controls the magnify window position and activeness, the Z shift the fine scrolls of the screen, the X shift the attribute scroll, rotates and

mirrors, the C shift the course screen scroll, rotates and mirrors and the Caps shift group contains most of the screen design functions. Brush control is also by keyboard with a Q-A and O-P cursor. For joystick addicts a programmable joystick interface such as the COMCON is the only escape from this keyboard madness. New users will be pleased to know that apart from the excellent manual SOFTCAT MICRO'S supplies an 'AT A GLANCE OPTIONS' card for new users in despair.

Four help or menu screens (Design, Sprites, Load & Save and general menu), can be called up to provide useful info on function access. The major problem with using the package arises by virtue of the sheer number of facilities on offer: it will require constant use of ANIMATOR1 to remember all the command calls. Users of Hisoft's DEVPAC will know how difficult it is to familiarise so many control keys and, despite the logical grouping of keys, even with frequent use ANIMATOR1 is not that easy to use for somebody with a puny memory. Once you are familiar with the keyboard however, the controls can be operated at lightning speed compared to any mouse/pulldown menu system.



Sid the Spaceperson is a tiny sprite indeed - at that size you can fit him and 184 similarly sized spritelets into memory. Note how the text used on screen has been played with — just one facility in the ANIMATOR1 package

ANIMATOR1 provides 4 graphic creation modes.

The DESIGN mode enables ANIMATOR1 to be customised to the user's individual needs. Apart from selecting paintbrushes and airbrushes, hatches and colour, it allows the speed of the cursor to be modified (with an optional Beep indicator for pixel work). The Edit mode uis fabulous, allowing brushes, airbrushes, hatches, character sets and UDGs to be redesigned. The magnify window, which is the draw window, is positioned at the bottom right of the screen and using the editor, detail can be scrolled with the cursor to point on the UDG or brush pattern to be modified. All the patterns and characters are displayed on the screen and can be accessed and edited in the simplest possible way.

The LINE & CIRCLE modes provide elastic drawing of lines and circles. ANIMATOR1 allows both ends of a line to be moved at the same time for positioning. Similarily, the circle may be moved about for positioning, while the diameter may be altered. Only when the right size and position has been chosen is the circle fixed.

The PRINT mode is uncanny. Once a string is entered using the current character set, it may be controlled as if it were a brush. Using shift keys 1, 2 and 3 the text may be expanded and contracted, squeezed and unsqueezed vertically and horizontally, and the spacing between letters expanded and contracted horizontally and vertically. The variations are staggering and text can be made to run at all angles.

Under general screen facilities everything can be found from Clear screens (bit image, attribute image for screen and sprites), sprite mask creation (effectively inverses all the sprites in memory to provide automatic sprite masks), screen inversion, screen scrolls, fine and coarse, (bit image, attribute or both), horizontal and vertical mirroring as well as the rotation and fill routines.

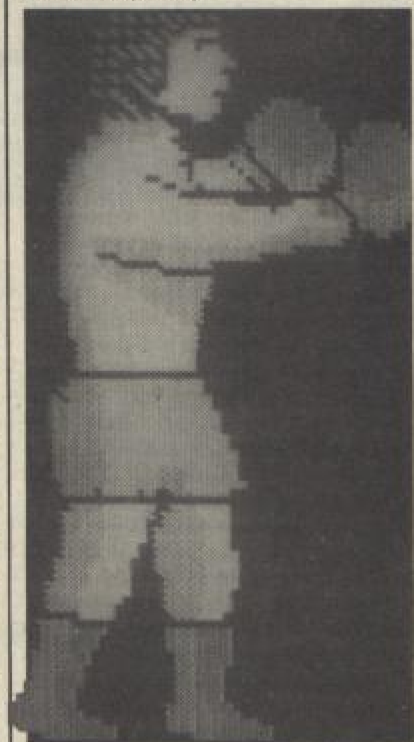
Needless to say, extensive save and load facilities are provided for screens, sprites (indicating width and depth, first and last sprite number, character squares - if used as UDG's -, bit or attribute image only), character sets, UDG's, hatches, brushes and airbrushes. SAVEing cab be done to cassette, Microdrive or Opus Discovery One. For Microdrive and disk drive there is an ERASE and CAT facility. ANIMATOR1 should be able to be converted onto other disk drives if there are no memory conflicts, as all the save and load commands have been left in BASIC for easy access.

THE COOKBOOK

The manual is excellent with a short introduction on how to get started, detailed instructions on the various drawing modes and information on all the menus. A chapter of *Questions and Answers* provides some useful hints and tips on applications. The concise index and appendix with the menu screens round off the user manual. A note pad and the not-to-be-missed control overview card (in short memory-ersatz) complete the package.

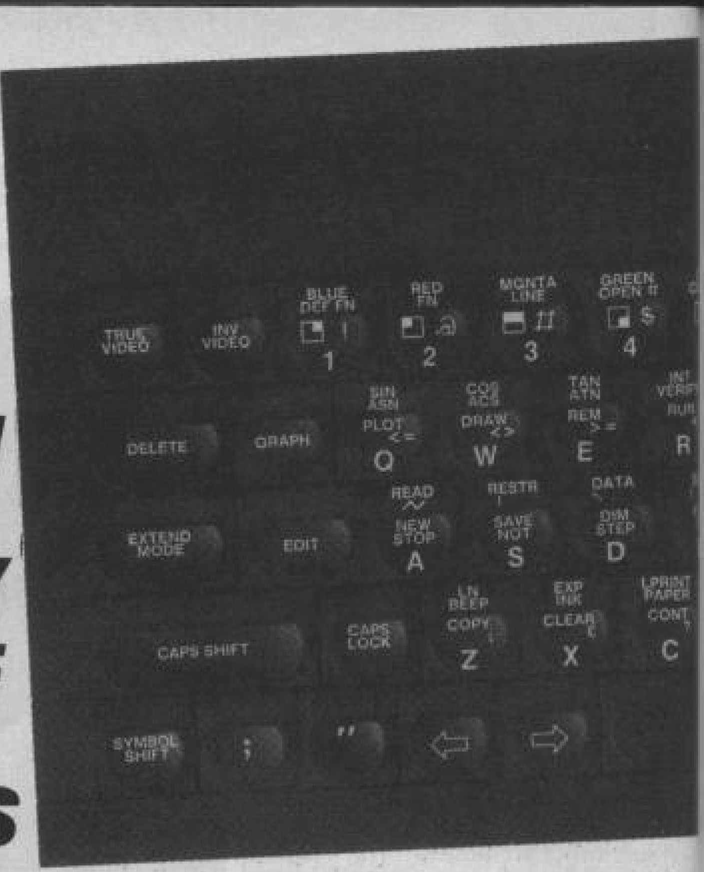
BON APPETIT!

ANIMATOR1 is a superb sprite and screen designer. For serious screen work there is hardly anything missing. Where it falls short is in presentation graphics and in a hard print facility for 80 column dot matrix printers. This is not surprising, as the author clearly intended designing a practical workhorse rather than a fancy graphics package. Perhaps this is where the major differences stems between ART STUDIO and ANIMATOR1. ANIMATOR1 is clearly superior as regards to practical screen and sprite facilities, but is not as attractive as ART STUDIO. On the other hand there is no real excuse for poor display graphics. The fear of creating a barrier between amateur user and professional has in fact undermined the quality of the program itself. It certainly doesn't stimulate the user to make any great artistic achievements. I sincerely hope prospective customers will not jump to the wrong conclusions on the basis of the (lack) of graphic quality.



a boxing sprite from demo screen

Product: ANIMATOR1
Producer: SOFTCAT MICROS, PO Box 79, Macclesfield, Cheshire, Sk10 3NP TEL: 0625 615379
Author: D. Latham
Price: £14.95
Compatible with Spectrum 48K, PLUS and 128



MIDI AND THE 128K SPECTRUM

An everyday story of interfaces

All was not well on the reviewers' farm. For a start nobody had heard of the RS232 to MIDI lead promised faithfully in the users handbook that comes with the 128K Spectrum, not even the firm making up the leads — Sinclair were sure they knew all about it. In fact the man on the end of the cable maker's phone, who dealt with our enquiries had not even heard of MIDI. Musical Instrument Digital Interface, we explained to him. The reviewer felt glum. What was he to do?

"Many people will be disappointed if you do not write about this wonderful interface," sighed the Editor, "I'll get Franco to make you one specially."

The technical details in the 128 handbook were minimal. The reviewer thought and thought. "I know, I'll ask that bright lad who writes TECH-TIPS to help me." And so saying, the reviewer made many more phone calls to Sinclair and Simon. He learnt that the pins on the RS232 number from right to left as you look at them. "There are six pins and you must use pins one and five", said a voice on the reviewer's answerphone one day. Aha! Those must connect up to pins five and four on the five pin din plug that is used on the MIDI system he thought aloud.

When the PLAY mode is used on the Spectrum 128 it is possible to insert commands that convert pins 1 and 5 on the RS232 interface to MIDI output. MIDI, as you should know by now, is a universal standard by which all digital instruments can converse with one another exchanging note data, voice ch anges, key velocity, volume, timing and so on. Using the 128's MIDI capabilities in this manner the 128K machine can be used to direct up to 8 separate synthesisers, or any synthesiser capable of receiving eight separate channels. Using MIDI, and the appropriate musical instruments, up to 8 notes can be played at any one time, which is a lot better than the miserly three notes that the internal sound chip allows.

When the letter Y followed by a MIDI channel number is included at the beginning of a note string, that string of notes is sent along the respective MIDI channel when it's encountered by the PLAY command. There are sixteen MIDI channels to choose from, and most MIDI instruments will use some if not all of these. It is important that you check which channel a synthesiser is receiving on before asking it to play music sent down the line from the Spectrum — if the synth isn't listening to the appropriate channel(s) the sound of silence is all you'll hear.

16 CHANNELS

Synthesisers usually go into OMNI mode when they're powered up — that is they receive on all 16 channels at once. If you only have one synth connected to the 128 then leave it in that mode and all should be well. Many synthesisers have a selection option between poly and mono mode. If you are going to ask it to play more than one note at a time, or receive more than one note strings at a time, then leave it in poly mode or there might be some unexpected results!

To begin with try something simple. The following is the bass line from *Ghostbusters*:

```
30 Let 30 c$ = "M7O3N1c&c&$eeg&$b&$b&f&f&))"
40  Play c$
```

(NB O is an upper case letter!)

RUNning this little program, plays the internal chip.

If you now connect the computer to a MIDI synthesiser, switch on the synth and enter insert **Y1** at the beginning of the note string your synth should now play the bass line along with the Spectrum's internal chippery. By changing the receiving status of the synth to receive say, only on channel 2, you'll no doubt notice that the synth has gone all quiet. This is because your 128 is only transmitting on MIDI Channel 1! However, if another synth is linked via the 'MIDI Through' port on the back of your first keyboard (or maybe via 'MIDI Out' depending on the make of equipment) you can run two strings of notes simultaneously and send each string to a separate synth providing the two synths are set up to receive on appropriate channels. Up to eight note strings can be run simultaneously. If you only have one synth then set it in OMNI mode.

TRICKS UP THE SLEEVE

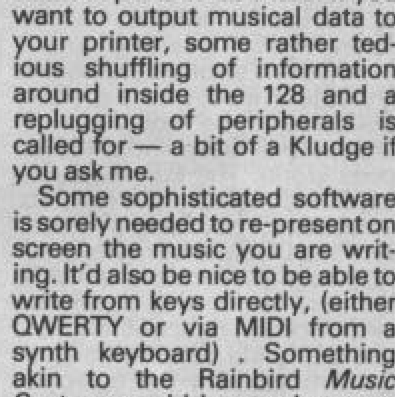
The 128 has two other tricks up its sleeve. All **V** (volume) commands inserted in the string also affect synthesisers capable of sensing velocity, although too many Volume commands make for long strings! The other trick is the insertion of a **Z**. Follow a Z with the code for the function you require and the 128 should tell the synth directly to do anything that it will accept on the MIDI line, such as change voice, timbre and so on. Some specific codes for your synth are (or should be) listed in the handbook supplied with it, as the Sinclair booklet cheerfully states, going into no further detail.

Herein lies a problem. It is not abundantly clear which code work — I tried both binary and decimal coding with a variety of synthesisers, but both protocols failed dismally. Drum machines also rely on a constant clock frequency which seems to be missing from the 128's MIDI port. I'll keep trying to get the Spectrum to talk down the line with Z codes, and if anyone out there has cracked the problem, please drop me a line and I'll share the knowledge.

A LITTLE UNFRIENDLY

At present the 128 does not seem to want to accept MIDI data, either. This would be of a little use to the integral sound chip, but in many respects such a facility could make the system a little more flexible in that two way software could be written. I suspect that the music and MIDI implementation were more of an afterthought on this machine, as a little more foresight would have enabled standard MIDI in and out ports to be fitted. If you want to output musical data to your printer, some rather tedious shuffling of information around inside the 128 and a replugging of peripherals is called for — a bit of a Kludge if you ask me.

Some sophisticated software is sorely needed to re-present on screen the music you are writing. It'd also be nice to be able to write from keys directly, (either QWERTY or via MIDI from a synth keyboard) . Something akin to the Rainbird *Music System* would be much appreciated. Any chance, Rainbird?



The reviewer felt happier. The machine had performed almost perfectly. Now he could face the Editor and sleep easier knowing that CRASH readers could make music with their 128s without too many tears.



Collect a £3.00 voucher redeemable against your next PSS game bought direct from them as well!

Back in October last year Simon Goodwin took a look at BASIC compilers for the Spectrum in Tech Niche. *Mcoder III*, a program written by French software house Ere Informatique fared reasonably well in the comparison tests.

PSS are the fellows who are selling the compiler in this country — and it usually goes for £12.95. But they're nice chaps at PSS, and they've agree to let Tech Niche readers have their very own copy of *Mcoder III* for £9.95 — and you don't need a compiler to work out that's a saving of £3.00. But there's more. PSS are going to throw in a £3.00 voucher, redeemable against any PSS game for the Spectrum providing you buy it direct from PSS mail order at 452 Stoney Stanton Road, Coventry, CV6 5DG.

Not a bad deal, eh? If you'd like to take advantage of this money saving offer, whizz a cheque or postal order for £9.95 madê payable to CRASH MICRO to Auntie Aggie together with the coupon at the foot of the page. She'll do the business for you . . .

PLEASE SEND ME A MCODER III

NAME ....

ADDRESS ....

....

.... POST CODE ....

TECH TIPS



Simon Goodwin

This month Simon explains how you can hook up a Spectrum or Spectrum Plus to a composite video monitor, checks out a couple of utility packages for programmers, and delves into the inner workings of Cheetah's SpecDrum drum synthesiser.

CUSTOM DRUMS

Last month I promised further information about Cheetah's excellent SpecDrum peripheral. In the Robin Candy tradition I list a small program which lets you customise the drum sounds Cheetah supply.

This month I'll explain how to rename sounds and change their channels, allowing combinations of drums which Cheetah doesn't provide for; in the June Crash I hope to tell you how to make your own sounds. So far, most of my experiments have yielded pretty awful noises, but I'm getting there slowly!

FREE SAMPLES

The SpecDrum works by replaying a digitally-recorded sound wave-form through your hifi. The recording consists of a list of volume changes which are scanned by a program; the resultant pattern is converted into an audio signal by electronics in the SpecDrum interface, and comes out as sound when squirted through an amplifier.

The original list, or 'sample', is produced by running this process in reverse, feeding a succession of volume changes produced by real drums into the computer (using special hardware). This is the technique used by the Datel Sound Sampler, which we reviewed last year — it is also used in expensive music synthesisers like the Fairlight.

You can sample absolutely ANY sound; percussion is a good choice because you can do interesting things with a few short samples. The SpecDrum packs eight sounds into 21K of memory. Another 20K is occupied by the code that lets you enter and hear patterns, and the rhythm patterns themselves.

You need extra electronics to make new samples from real life, because the SpecDrum is only an output device. Of course, that doesn't stop you fiddling with the pre-recorded sounds or creating synthetic ones.

DRUM FILES

The custom drum editor works with individual drum files. Two of these are recorded on the B side of the Specdrum tape. The Kit Editor, reviewed last month, lets you break a kit of eight drums into separate files for each sound.

SpecDrum files come in two parts, like normal Spectrum files, but the format is different. The first part of the file is shorter — just eight characters. The first character indicates the drum type and other seven characters are the name.

The drum code determines which position in the kit the drum can be used in. The SpecDrum allows eight positions. Drum codes range from 129 to 132, as shown in Table 1. They also indicate the length of the sample — the subsequent data block. Each sample is either 2K or 3K long; in practice some of the samples use less than their full allotment of space (eg the STICK and CABASA), but this doesn't matter much and it helps to keep the software simple.

The Specdrum has three playback channels. The drum at position one in the kit (normally the bass drum) is played on channel one. The drums at positions two, three and four use channel two, and the last four drums use channel three. There is a slight complication (as if it wasn't complicated enough already) in that drums at position five and six use shorter samples than seven and eight, so the sounds are not interchangable. All of this is made clear (I hope) in Table 1.

The interesting thing is that samples for position 1 are the same size as those for positions 5 and 6. Similarly, samples for positions 2, 3, 4, 7 and 8 are all the same size. The SpecDrum software checks the file codes and won't let you load samples into incorrect positions — but in practice samples work perfectly well in the wrong position, so long as they fit. You can even load a 2K sample into a 3K position, if you make sure that the last 1K contains zeros. A 3K sample obviously won't fit into a 2K hole.

DRUM EDITOR

My program lets you load samples into memory. You can modify them with POKE commands and save them back onto tape. Later you can load them into the main SpecDrum system, or the Kit Editor, as if they were official samples.

Enter the program and type RUN to load a sample. GO TO 200 saves the most recent sample loaded, with any changes you may have made.

At the moment the result of the USR call is ignored, but you can add lines to check it if you like — a value of 147 indicates a successful load (don't ask me why). There are lots of other ways in which the program could be improved; it's a basis for experimentation which can be entered quickly.

When a drum sample is loaded you can PEEK or POKE the file type at address 26789. The name is stored in normal ASCII code (as listed at the back of the Spectrum manual) from address 26790 to 26796. The actual sample is stored from address 26799 onwards.

ZIGUE ZIGUE SPECTRUM

I'll give one example. Use the Kit Editor to save the Latin Kit Kick Drum (KICK D) on tape. Then load the sample editor. Type RUN and play the Kick Drum sample into memory. When you type PRINT PEEK 26789 you'll get 129, which means that the SpecDrum system will only let you load the drum into position 1. Type POKE 26789,131, then GO TO 200 to save the modified sample.

You can load the new version in position 5 or 6, getting a kit with two different bass drums in it . . . . watch out Zigue Zigue Sputnik! More offbeat hints next month.



RAW VIDEO

At long last Sinclair decided to put a Composite video port on the Spectrum 128. This means that you can connect a PAL composite video monitor directly to the machine. This gives a better picture than a telly. Why?

A TV is meant to receive radio signals. A complicated knot of wires, coils and components is used to sift out a single picture from all the other gibberish whizzing through the airwaves — The Price Is Right, Wogan, the Janice Long show and so forth. Another box of tricks inside your micro — the modulator — converts the raw video signal your telly really needs into radio, so that the TV can laboriously convert it back again.

This adds up to a good deal of needless signal processing. The signal inevitably gets a bit distorted en route. You end up with stripey colours, distorted characters and a display that is generally less clear than it would be if the computer and the TV were connected directly.

It is possible to buy monitors — displays designed to accept video information directly, rather than via a radio signal. Now that video recorders are common, many TVs also have direct video inputs so that you can bypass the radio circuitry, which is obviously not needed when playing back a recorded tape. If you've got that sort of display you can usually improve the picture by sending your Spectrum's video signal directly to the appropriate socket, by-passing the modulator in the computer and the de-modulator in the telly.

It is NOT safe to try to wire in your own by-pass socket at the TV end. There are some very lethal voltages inside a TV.

RED GREEN BLUE

The best picture of all is obtained if a computer is hooked up to the three electron guns inside the display which produce Red, Green and Blue spots respectively. You can make any other colour by mixing these three, and the direct connection to the guns gives a very clear picture. This is called an 'RGB' connection; a Spectrum 128 is capable of producing RGB signals but the normal Spectrum can't, unless you add extra hardware.

The plain vanilla Spectrum doesn't use separate red, green and blue signals internally — it uses colour differences because they are easier to mix up into a combined or Composite Video signal. However you CAN get in a little later and extract the composite video signal before it gets modulated; all you need to know is where to look.

HOME VIDEO INTERFACE

One of the tags on the edge connector at the back of a Spectrum is labelled Video (B-15) but this is not usually wired up — you need to make a small change to the circuit-board to route a signal there. Even if you make this change the signal will not be very clear, because there is a good deal of interference from the tags nearby.

It is much better to take a signal from inside the Spectrum, at the point where it goes into the modulator. Naturally, you should resist the temptation to pull your computer apart unless it is out of warranty and you are competent at soldering. Disconnect EVERYTHING before you start work.

Dismantle the Spectrum by undoing the screws on the underside in the usual way. Turn the machine the right way up, as if you were about to type something, and gently lift the keyboard up and towards you by about four centimetres. You should not need to disconnect the cables joining the keyboard and the circuitry in the lower part of the case — but be careful not to pull on them accidentally.

Behind the TV socket you will see a silver box — the modulator. Two wires on the left side carry power (5 volts) and the video signal. The video wire is nearest to the back of the computer — it goes through a plastic insulator in the side of the modulator.

Connect a piece of screened cable to the case of the modulator and the video wire. The screen (outer part) of the wire goes to the metal case — the inner part goes to the video wire. Make certain that you connect the wires firmly, or you may not get a good picture. Put solder on the wires before you bring them into contact with the computer, so that they stick at once.

Don't hold the iron against any part of the computer for more than a second. Don't allow any stray uninsulated wire near to the modulator power wire — if it is accidentally shorted out your computer could be damaged.

Put a suitable plug on the other end of the cable so your Spectrum can be connected up to the display. You may want to put an extra plug and socket close to the computer, so that your Spectrum doesn't have a tail trailing behind it. The inner part (if any) of each plug should be connected to the inner conductor of the cable. The outer part, connected to the modulator box, acts as an earth screen to keep interference to a minimum.

When you put the computer back together and select the PAL video input at the display, you should get a clear colour picture. If you don't, disconnect the power at once and check your work. The normal UHF signal should still be available from the Spectrum's TV socket — you can even drive two displays at once if you want to. Sometimes the video picture will be improved if you disconnect the feed into the modulator, but in general this is not necessary. Make sure that you can re-connect the modulator easily if need be.

FINE CHARACTERS

If you're looking for a new character-set to add atmosphere to a game or utility, Alan Grier's £1.99 package might solve your problem.

Fonts is the rather dull name of a utility program which gives you the choice of 20 different character-sets for use in your own software. The program lets you choose between a display of the alphabet in twenty different styles, including italics, bold type, stencil lettering, Olde English and Amstrad-style serif characters. Once you've chosen a character-set you can save it as a short tape file.

The character-sets are attractive, well-proportioned and generally clear, although the 3D shadow and Olde English faces were obviously limited by the Spectrum's 64-point character grid. It is a pity that eight out of 20 of the character-sets did not include matching lower-case (small) letters.

The on-screen instructions are inadequate for a beginner, because they don't say how to decide where characters should be loaded, but they form an adequate aide-memoire for the programmers who are likely to buy this package.

If you're bored with the Spectrum's 'ransom note' lettering and you can't be bothered to design your own replacement set, the *Fonts* cassette is good value. It costs £1.99 from Alan Grier at 1 Dayaar Road, Saltcoats, Ayrshire KA21 6HB



MONITOR LIZARD

I'll turn to another type of monitor now, and the *Cammac One* package which costs £5.95 from Micro Zeighty of 7 The Crescent, Hurstbourne Tarrant, Andover SP11 OAP. Sadly, this is not a package that I can recommend.

Cammac One is a large program, mostly written in ZX BASIC, which allows you to assemble, disassemble and monitor Spectrum machine code. The program takes up about 24K of memory, leaving 17K for code and data.

The documentation — a piece of A4-sized paper — discusses the package under three headings: the assembler, the disassembler, and the tester/monitor. All three parts are called up with a BASIC GO TO command. If you accidentally type RUN you'll wipe out all the variables and you'll have to reload the whole package.

You enter assembler instructions in response to a normal Spectrum INPUT statement — there is no prompt. In fact, there are no prompts or menus anywhere in the package. There's no error trapping, either. If you make a mistake, or type something you shouldn't, the program either ignores you, generates an instruction 'similar' to what you typed (!), or halts with a BASIC report.

A beep greets instructions which are recognised; the line is then printed on the main part of the screen. If your chosen instruction has a parameter — a value or an address — you must type it in separately. Labels are not allowed. Nor are equates. The assembler just ignores both. If you are so bold as to try to use one of the few hundred instructions that require a prefix byte you must warn Cammac first — each and every time — or your input is ignored.

The disassembler, accessed with GO TO 5, is the fastest part of the package; it takes about three seconds to fill the screen with data, before pausing with the usual Scroll? question. Instructions are only partially disassembled — the program prints N or NN in place of parameters, followed by the appropriate values spread over up to three lines.

The tester/monitor turns out to be a routine that prints register values and a single sort-of disassembled instruction over the top of anything else on the screen. Every couple of seconds a black square appears, and the next instruction may be executed (with appropriate changes to the display) when you press a key. You can't alter register values or set breakpoints. If you want to load, save, display memory values, or jump to an address you have to Break into the monitor and use ZX BASIC as normal. You can step over instructions more quickly, without the display, with a RAND USR call from BASIC.

Cammac One is non-standard, unreliable, slow and inadequately documented. Micro Zeighty describe *Cammac One* as 'one of the best machine code packages around'. Don't believe them — I can't think of any package worse.

And so another column ends. Our Spectrum 128 is still in the hands of Micro Muso Jon Bates, who has set himself the task of getting it to talk to his garage full of MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface) synthesisers. As this column was being written, he was struggling with a much trickier problem — getting Sinclair Research to talk to him about the nitty gritty of the interface! With luck, Jon's findings should appear in this issue's Tech Niche but I have had to put off my own expose of the 128's hardware secrets until next month.

I'm still investigating programming contracts, and would like to hear from readers with tales to tell, whether cautionary or encouraging — confidentiality guaranteed, if you wish it. Whether you've been done, or done something, I hope you'll keep me posted: TECH TIPS, CRASH, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1AQ

WINNERS & PRIZES

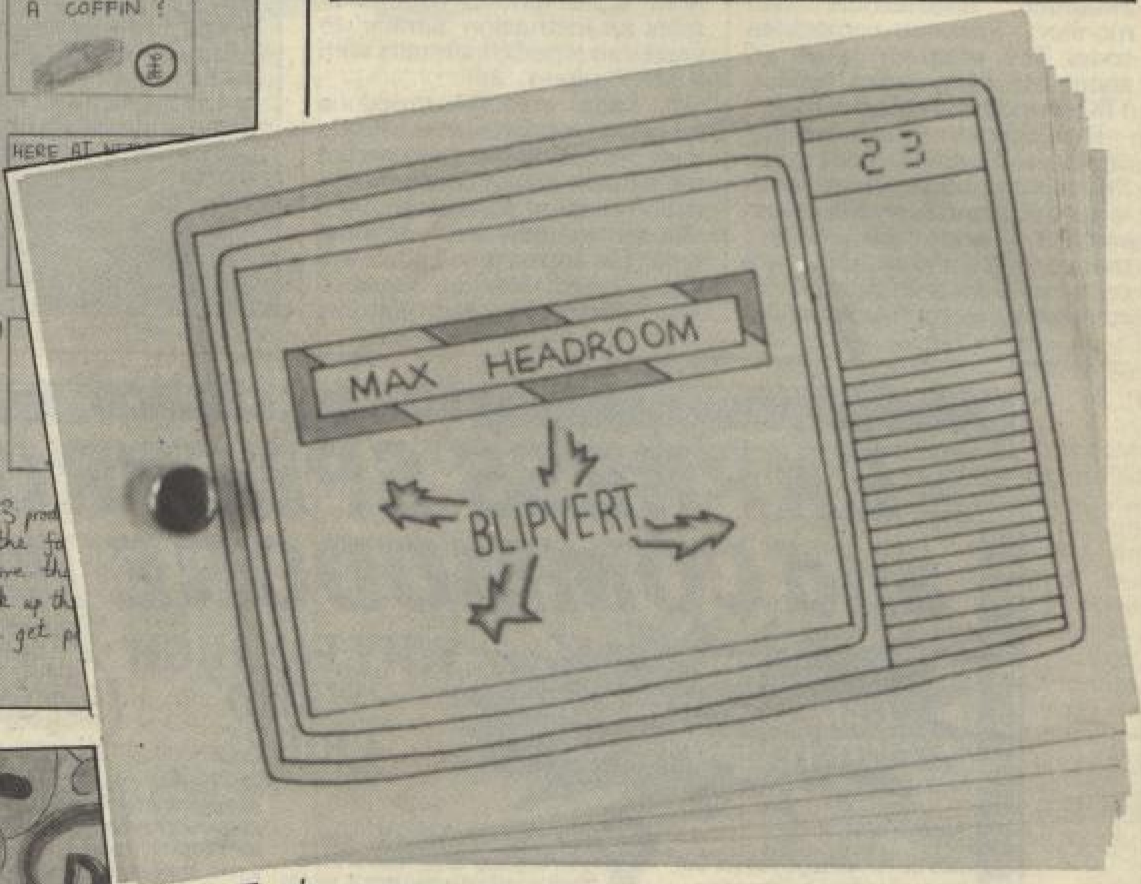


A Minion's life is not an easy or happy one, especially when there's a mountain of mail to sort. Which is every day, here in CRASH Towers, as you lot simply won't stop sending in entries. I nearly had an assistant the other week, but then the CRASHtionnaire forms had to be dealt with and I was on my own, as usual. Ho hum. Maybe I'll get the chance to earn some overtime one day, and have my own bumper twenty four page competition pull-out. No. Wait — that'd mean even more mail for me to sort . . . . AAAARGH!

Here's a few more resultipoos: I'm off to the broom cupboard for a kip. See ya next month.







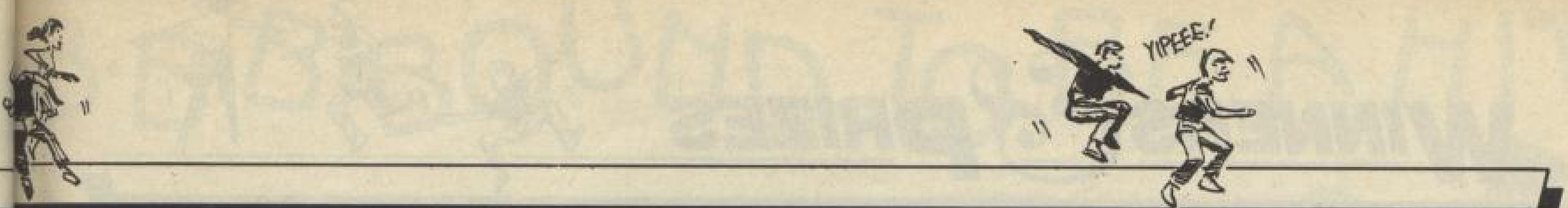


MAX HEADROOM

The blipvert competition certainly proved popular — Saatchi and Saatchi could have some serious problems if a few CRASH readers decide to get involved in the advertising business. Chief copywriter was Colin Reekie from St Monans KY10 2DH, who devised a cunning 'Flipvert' — one of those little booklet doobries with a seqeunce of pictures which spring to life in an animated sequence when you flip the pages. His im.m.m.m.m.magination will be rewarded with a Max Megapack and a trip to Max's studio complex. But fifteen more people won prizes, and they are:

MEGA PACK WINNERS. Simon Clark, Long Lane, HP3 0NE; David Green, Greenhill Rd, S8 0BA; Scott Griffen, Christchurch Rd, NP9 8BE; Russell Fields, Stradbroke Rd, S13 8LS; Barry Davis, The Street, IP31 2JU; David Duffett, High St, MK18 3DQ; Richard Doyle, Nash House, E17 3EW; Ross Lippiatt, Brockley, BS19 3BB; A Jones, London Rd, TN37 6PA, *V *M; Jason Howell, Pople St, NR18 0LW

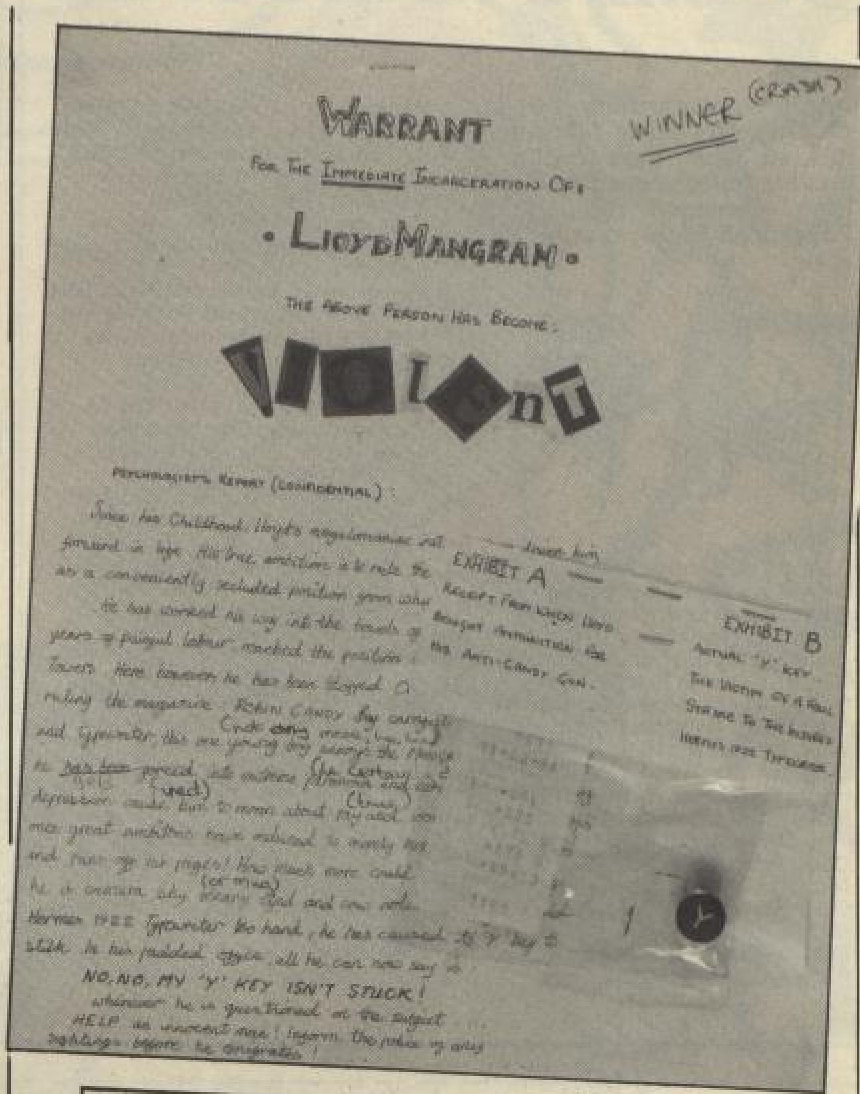
MAX MINIPACK WINNERS James Smith, 11 Pilleys Lane, PE21 9RA; Francis Macnell, Macleod Rd, PA87 2HI; Thoams Caldwell, Water Lane, WF4 4DY; Henry Collingridge, Upper Edgeborough, GU1 2BJ; Paul Kitchener, West End Close, NE13 0BA



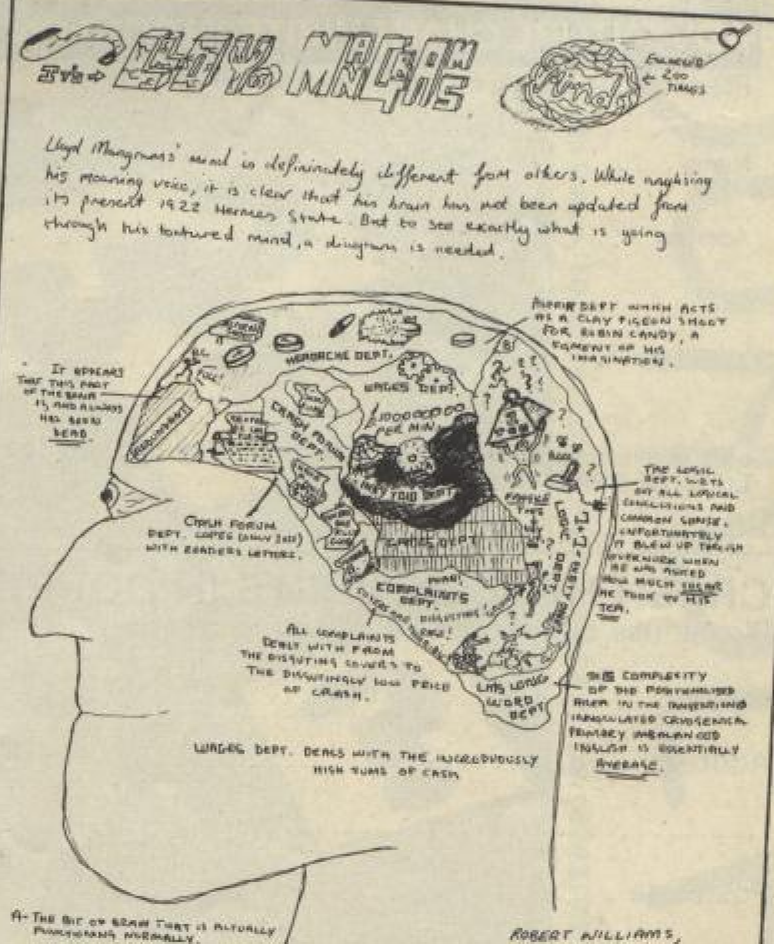
BRAIN DRAIN

You enjoyed yourselves with this one didn't you? The overall winner diagnosed Lloyd as both psychotic and paranoid. His accurate assessment of the effects of Candyphobia and the inclusion of exhibits (right down to the Y key from Lloyd's Hermes) made his entry extra special. Well done Peter Brannelly of Churchill Road, SY6 6EP. You get a DIY Guide to brain surgery and a neato Canon Autofocus camera to play with. Twenty five more winners collect a copy of CRL's game ID.

Tony Naylor, Hillbrook Grove, B33 8DG; M Wakefield, Gleneagles Drive, PR8 3TH; Adrian O'Sullivan, Pinkham Mansions, W4 3BG; Ms N J Cocking, Buxton Rd, NR12 7NG; David Jackson, Landsmoor Dr, PR4 5PE; JD Hurding, Johnson Rd, BR2 9SN; Daryl Joanson, Monks Meadow, PE6 0LJ; Robert Williams, Thirlmere Grove, BL4 0QB; Christopher Turner, White Woman Lane, NR6 7JL; Mark Rowley, Sunnyside Rd, WN4 0LB; James Driscoll, Coombe Bisset, Wilts; David Gordon, Revidge Rd, BB1 8DJ; Jamie Orr, Humbie, EH36 5PN; Nigel Palmer, Glenalmond, NR4 6AG; J Rolph, Penrhyn Rd, NN4 9EE; Geoffrey Tidey, Shephall Green, SG2 9XS; Paul Glancey, Elsdon Drive, NW12 9RH; Paul Callinan, Boucher Rd, ST13 7JH; Stephen Harrison, Meyer Rd, DA8 3SJ; Paul Hughes, Buccleuch St, PA15 1NY; Simon Trilsbach, Apple Tree Way, SS11 8JL; Giles perryman, Mortonsampstead, TQ13 8QQ; J Robinson, Wortham Way, SG2 9SH; G Jenkins, Aldborough Rd Sth, IG3 8HS; John Lewis, Greatmeadow Rd, LE4 0QA







WINNERS & PRIZES



COSMIC WARTOAD

And a wordsearching they did go. The fifty lucky folk below will all have their copies of *Cosmic Wartoad* once the Toads have sproinged through the Royal Mail Maze, that is! Well done.



G Steadman, Strood Rd, TN37 6PN; Barry Kavanagh, Floyd Rd, SE7 8AN; Andrew Crawford, Harptree Drive, ME5 0TH; Tony Gunning, Keyworth Drive, NG19 0DE; Daniel Pike, Hill Rd, NG6 8TJ; Darren Kerr, Milverton Rd, G46 7LP; Paolo Morra, Dunstan Rd, NW11 8AG; Nicholas Falk, Farm Walk, NW11 7TP; Nigel Bryant, Dalgliesh Way, LE14 3RX; Benjamin Henry, Cavendish Avenue, CB1 4UP; Pantelis Athanasiadis, Areos Street, Palaidn Phalepon, ATHENS; Andrew Cook; Redruth Coome, TR16 6RT; Nicholas O'Brien, Stoneythorpe Close, B91 3XE; Alan Anderson, Oldfield Close, L60 6RL; AJ Coleman, Manilla Rd, B29 7PZ; Martin Rushton, Pitgreen Lane, ST5 0BD; Gary Whittingslow, Oxford Rd, B27 6DU; Jamie Paterson, Lypiatt Mead, SN13 9JL; SC Pettitt, Grosvenor Rd, GL2 0SB; Mitchel Scott, Springfields Cam, GL11 6PL; Tim Cubitt, Collingwood, CT15 6EX; Andrew Males, Lammas Path, SG2 9RN; Mark Perkins, Brackley Rd, HP15 7EY; Simon Jones, Swinburne Place, SN4 8LE; Peter Hirschfield, Beech Grove, HU5 3DB; David Rayment, Ripley Drive, LN6 8JD; AJ Markham, Bishops Walk, NR31 9BQ; Tim Webster, Vicarage Lane, PE24 4JJ; Thomas Clowry, Grangegorman Villas, Dublin ; Andrew Hawkins, Carfield, WN8 9DL; Carl Tandy, Partridge Ave, ME20 6LS; Stephen Colver, Cartington, Tyne and Wear; Kevin Fisher, Bagstone, GL12 8BD; Graham Pugh, Ascot Close, CF5 5BE; Jonathan Perkins, Oxgate Gardens, NW2 6EB; Magnus Ramage, Claremont Gardens, G62 6PG; Darren Akast, Torridon Rd, SE6 1RF; Alistair Smith, Parklands, GL12 7LT; Peter Simonds, Lawn Lane, CB6 2RE; SD Leason, Heathfield Rd, ST14 7JN; Shaun Hennessy, Swaylands, TN11 8AE; Simon Newbery, Hazel Rd, RG8 8BB; Rob Pettifer, Addison Rd, CV22 7EZ; PH Parker, Manston Gardens, LS15 8EY; Julian Dalton, Styal Rd, SK8 3TX; Karl Alldred, New Moss Rd, M30 5JQ; Robert Redford, Foston Drove, S40 4SJ; Ian Hall, Reedley Rd, BS9 1BE; Robert Finlayson, Brentwood Drove, G53 7UJ; Peter Dean, Heathermere, SG6 4QH

SEIKO RC-1000 WATCH WINNER



There was only one super Seike watch to bestow as a prize in the Watch comp, and the winner certainly earned it. Cheers and sounds of bursting bubbly bottles to: Neil Martin, Limpley Stoke, BA3 6JR

ADVENTURE CHART WRITE-IN COUPON

Please use block capitals and write clearly!

Name ....

Address ....

....

postcode   T SHIRT SIZE ....

Send your coupon to: **CRASH ADVENTURE TRAIL, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB**

My top five programs are:

TITLE	VOTE OUT OF TEN
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

CRASH HOTLINE WRITE IN COUPON

Please use block capitals and write clearly!

Name ....

Address ....

....

Postcode ....

Send your coupon to: **CRASH HOTLINE, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB**

My top five favourite programs in descending order are:

TITLE	PRODUCER
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	


·B·B·B·BOUND TO BE A HIT··
"10 levels of fun make this torture excellent value for money. Nova rating. Definitely one of those 'just another go' games. Game of the month February" – Computer Gamer
"The most compulsive game I've ever played. If you don't buy it you'll never know what you've missed." says Gary Penn, Zzap! 64. Gold Medal Award. 97% overall.
COMMODORE 64 MSX
AMSTRAD SPECTRUM
B·B·B·B·BOUNDER··
Gremlin Graphics Software Limited, Alpha House, 10 Carver Street, Sheffield S1 4FS. Tel: (0742) 753423
Spectrum 48K £7·95



Cameron Pound plays PING PONG: he's got the ball down the computer's end of the table. The CPU's winning 2-0 and so far Cameron's hit the ball twice — you can tell that from the Player One score at the top of the screen



Cameron gets ready to rally the shot — will he make it?



Still losing, 3-0 down now but with five hits of the ball to credit, Cameron goes for a Smash. Five hundred points if pull it off, Cam — back to photography if you don't . . .



Producer: Imagine
Retail price: **£7.95**
Author: **Bernie Duggs**

P·I·N·G P·O·N·G

A CRASH Smash





Years on from the classic *Pong* game which had a lot to do with the birth of the computer games industry, Imagine have decided to tackle the sport of Ping Pong, releasing a product which plays rather more like the game of table tennis than the early bat and ball game. Imagine's *Ping Pong* is a conversion of Kjonami's arcade game and abides to all the rules and regulations of table tennis, interpreted automatically by a computerised judge — there's no room for tantrums in this game. The first player to score eleven points wins, unless there's a 10-10 tie, and five levels of play are available, ranging from nice 'n' slow to oriental style, played at the speed of sound.

The game is viewed from above and behind the base line of the table with your bat positioned about a quarter of the way up the screen. Player One always plays from this view point and the computer or second player takes the top end of the table — there's no change of ends. The score and other relevant information, including the judge's calls, is displayed on either side of the table. The audience appears on both sides of the screen, with the right hand side mob cheering on the computer or Player Two, whilst the spectators on the left shout and clap if you score a winning point.

The bat is controlled by a phantom disembodied hand — thus avoiding the problems that would be posed by full-size figures: seeing the table would be tricky. Timing and hitting a shot correctly is the key to the game — the computer automatically tracks the ball and always makes sure that your bat is behind it. When the ball reaches the bat select the sort of shot you'd like to play by pressing either left, right or up as the ball hits the bat — pressing right when the ball hits the bat gives a cut, left a drive and up a smash (but only smash when the ball is lobbed). The timing of the strike governs the direction in which the ball moves, veering to the left or right of the table. The bat is normally held forehand, but pressing the fire button switches to backhand mode allowing you to return a ball hit to the extreme right hand corner of the table.

The human player always has to serve first and this is done by pressing down to throw the ball into the air and following with a normal shot. There's a time limit to each serve and if the ball doesn't cross the net within seven seconds, a point is awarded to the opponent. After five points have been scored the service changes over, unless the game is tied at ten points apiece, when service alternates and the game continues until one player gets two points ahead of the other or reaches fifteen points.

Apart from the match points, players can collect points during the game and go for an entry on the *Ping Pong* high score table. Each time a player hits the ball, ten points are added to his or her score, while a massive five hundred points can be collected by successfully smashing the ball and winning a game point. At the end of each level of play, a bonus of one thousand points is awarded to the winner for each game point of the winning margin.

In the one player mode in which a human pits skills with the Spectrum's Central Processing Unit, play moves up a level each time the CPU loses. Two players play best of three matches to decide the winner, and select the skill level they wish to play at.

CRITICISM

"I loaded Ping Pong and immediately thought a Commodore 64 was attached . . . the sound on the game is brilliant, amazing — it defies all adjectives. Excellent drum beats, cool synth techniques: Wow! The game itself is very original and kept me compelled for ages. Imagine seem to be taking the software market by storm this year, I just hope they can keep it up! The table tennis table is well laid out in true 3D fashion and the game includes lots of nice features — apart from the usual definable keys there's a most exciting two player option and five levels of difficulty. Imagine seem to push the Spectrum to its limits with every game they bring out, goodness only knows what they're going to put on the 128K! I would recommend any arcade freak to buy Ping Pong at what is a very cheap price for a game of this quality on the Spectrum — and if you like adventures just buy it and dance to that groovy beat . . ."

CRITICISM

"The loading screen isn't of the usual Ocean/Imagine quality, but all my fears were dashed when I heard the the tune; undoubtedly the best on the Spectrum yet! I felt the only real thing wrong with the game is that the bat graphics could have been improved and given more movement — at the moment the bat seems to be controlled by wrist action only. Other than that, I think it's got everything a good game needs — it's attractive, addictive, and very playable. Imagine have done it again and now I've got to go and crack level five."

CRITICISM

"Kjonami's arcade game never really took off in Britain and after playing this I can't understand why — it's a really great game. The graphics suit the game very well and there are no attribute problems at all, but the sound . . . super duper, spiffing stuff guys! I really couldn't believe that a humble BEEPy Spectrum was uttering such impressive music. Just listen to it! The game plays very well too and is well worth buying."

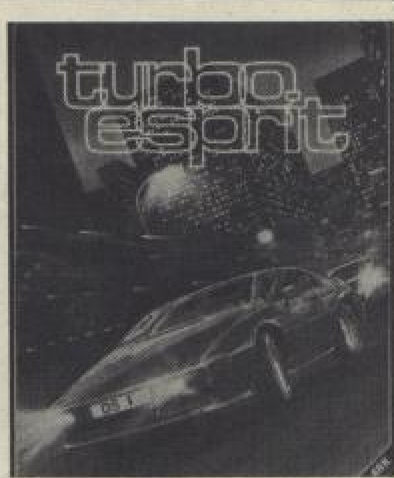
COMMENTS

Control keys: All definable
Joystick: Kempston, Interface 2, Cursor
Keyboard play: great
Use of colour: a bit bland, but fine
Graphics: not overly wonderful, but adequate for the game
Sound: unbelievably good — Spectrum excellence
Skill levels: five
Screens: one
General rating: A highly playable and enjoyable sports simulation.

Use of computer	92%
Graphics	82%
Playability	94%
Getting started	93%
Addictive qualities	91%
Value for money	89%
Overall	90%

TURBO ESPRIT

Producer: Durell
Retail price: **£8.95**
Author: **Mike Richardson**



You're an intrepid special agent with your very own Lotus Turbo Esprit. Your task — to smash an international ring of drug smugglers who are about to make a huge delivery of heroin.

An armoured car is supplying the drugs to the centre of a city and four delivery cars collect the narcotics from the supply vehicle as it tours the streets. Your mission is to stop the delivery cars, preferably after they have made their pick-ups and before they scuttle off to the drug gang's hideaways. Extra points are available if you can stop the armoured car before it leaves the city once all the drops have been made.

After the game has loaded, you are presented with a choice of four cities in which to combat the peddlers of evil substances — once the choice has been made the only way to change cities is to reload the game. A menu screen follows which allows you to view, save or load in high score tables, practise driving or play the game for real.

The action is viewed from the driving seat. The instruments on the dashboard, seen through the spokes of the steering wheel, include a speedometer, rev counter, fuel gauge and a temperature gauge. Don't worry about gear changes — the computer takes care of that. Keep an eye on the fuel gauge, though. When it looks a bit low simply pull onto the pavement (make sure it is pedestrian free first!) and if you're near a garage the tank re-fills.

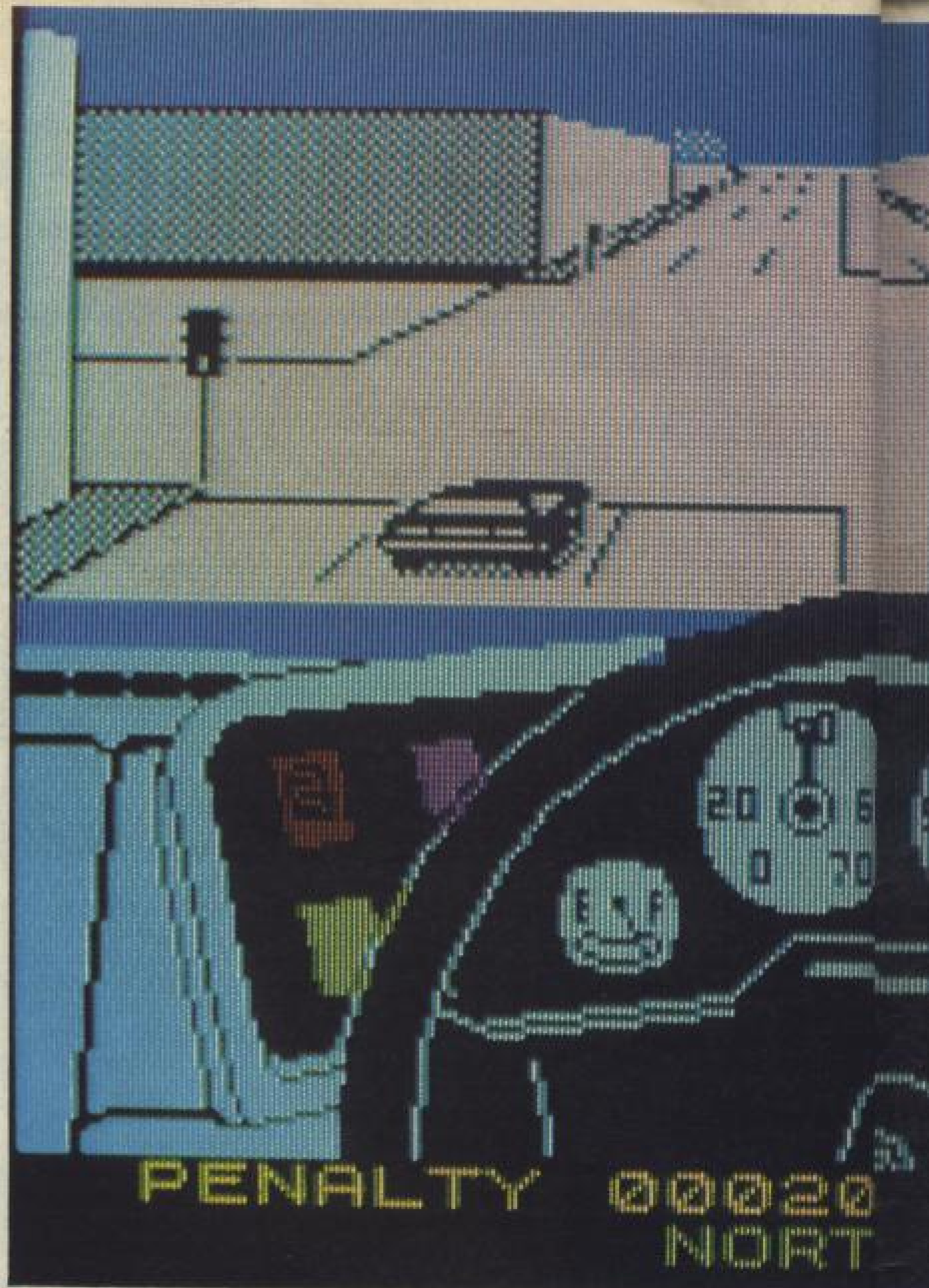
The view out of the windscreen includes a black car — your Turbo Esprit — which dodges and weaves through the traffic as you spin the wheel and accelerate and decelerate. The city streets scroll towards you as you motor along and the display is full of detail: pedestrians stump around the sidewalks, traffic lights and car indicators flash, petrol stations tout for custom and little men repair the roads. Driving into vehicles driven by innocent citizens, as well as shooting them up and running over pedestrians add to your tally of penalty points shown in the status area on the dashboard. Some mean driving is needed to stay on the tail of the perpetrators of evil while avoiding crashes. Don't despair if you write the car off — there are four available.

You are not entirely alone in your mission to quash the evil drug barons: messages from H.Q occasionally pop up at the bottom of your screen with information on the smugglers' whereabouts, and the same text area is used for status messages during the game.

The smugglers in ordinary cars can be stopped with a hail of bullets from you Turbo cannon. The baddies are easily identifiable — the delivery cars are blue and the armoured supply car is red. Don't be too trigger happy though, more points are won by ramming the smugglers' vehicles from behind while they are moving. Once a gangster car has taken a battering, the baddies surrender, and you can continue the mission. It's possible to intercept the armoured supply car at any time, but once the main vehicle has been disabled the supply cars cease operation and there are no more points to be collected.

The smugglers have a number of hit cars, with nifty magenta or purple paintjobs to aid recognition, and their gun-toting passengers are hot on your trail. They roar past you at great speed with guns blazing. If they hit the Lotus, a message flashes onto your console and the car may well go out of control. Alternatively, a stray bullet might be lodged in the engine, which leads to overheating and eventual seizure if you don't visit a garage and get the engine repaired in time.

The Turbo Esprit, apart from being a very fast motor indeed, has a pull-down map of the city which can be scrolled over the city, and highlights the position of your car as well as the drug baron's vehicles. Like they say: It's mean on the streets — be careful out there!

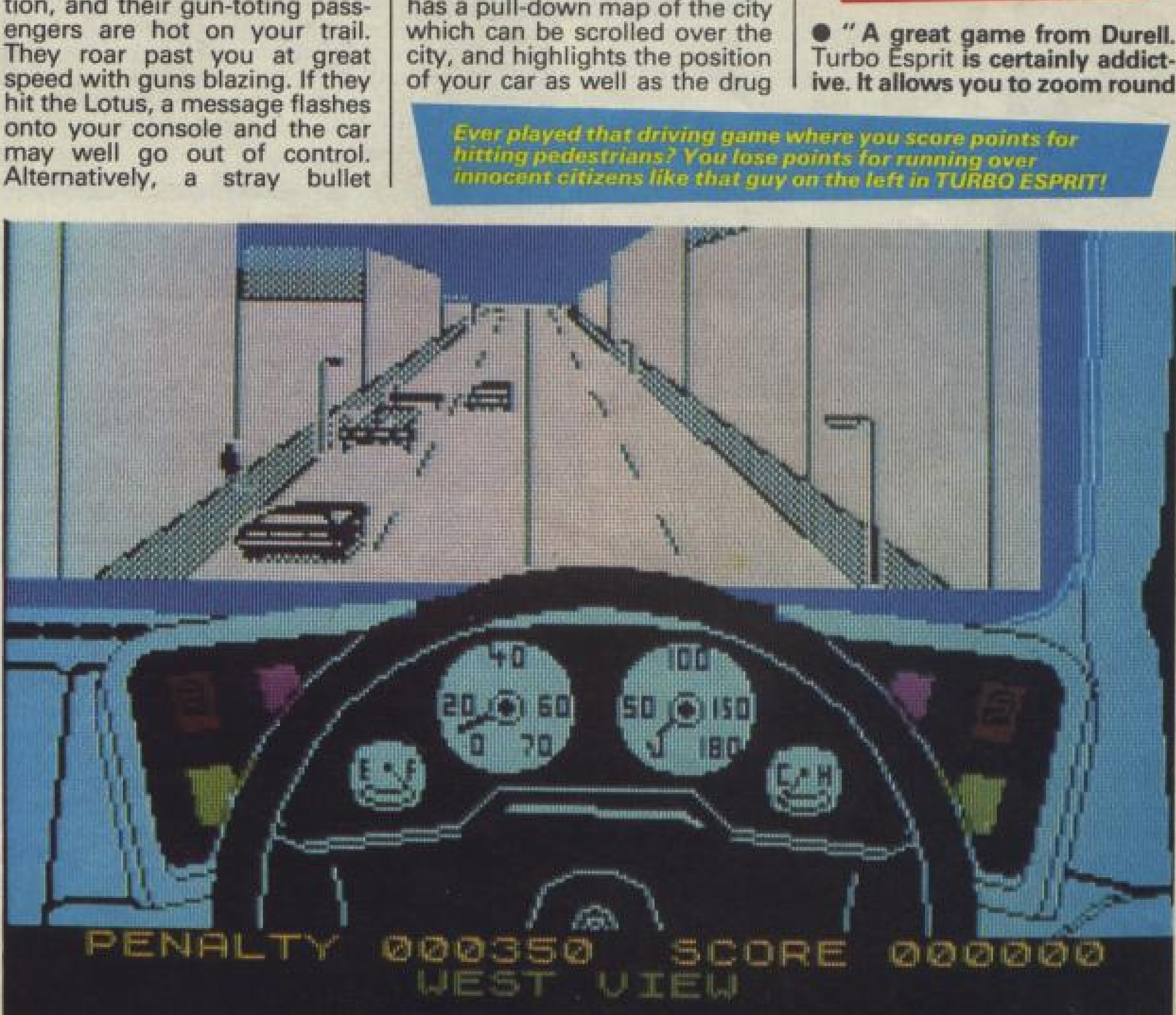


Waiting at the crossroads as you zoom around the city streets in pursuit of evil drug Barons. Cameron Pound was always a careful driver . . .

CRITICISM

● **"A great game from Durell.** Turbo Esprit **is certainly addictive. It allows you to zoom round**

Ever played that driving game where you score points for hitting pedestrians? You lose points for running over innocent citizens like that guy on the left in TURBO ESPRIT!





the back streets and alleyways, which I enjoyed particularly, but you have to be careful not to bump into other cars or pedestrians. To begin with, turning the car into side roads can be a bit tricky, because you have to judge the angle, and the control takes some getting used to, but it comes quite naturally after a while. Once you've located the drug barons the action gets fast and furious with high speed chases around the area. It's great fun — look out for it! "

● *" This game is great fun, put simply. Even if you don't bother knocking out drug cars, just driving around picking up penalty points is fun. The graphics aren't immediately astounding, but the detail soon becomes apparent, and once it does it's pretty surprising: pedestrians walk about, cars stop at lights and swerve to avoid roadworks, their indicators work and little men even work on roadlamps! The game is very playable and addictive, but it needs to be played for a good half an hour before all the subtleties become apparent. Congratulations, Durell, you've made me happy again. "*

● " Durell Software seem set to continue their long line of very well polished off software — with another good program, *Turbo Esprit. Turbo Esprit* is a very easy game to get into because of the simple plot, and I was very soon addicted. As on all Durell games the graphics are very sharp and yet very detailed due to the limited colour in parts. Again we have a few two channel simulated tunes at the important points of the game. *Turbo Esprit* gives you a good feel of what it's like to manoeuvre a sports car around the streets of cities and lets you try your hand at three point turns up one way streets, which I can assure you gives exciting driving. This is a superb game for all shoot em up and car freaks, and is reasonably priced at £8.95. "

COMMENTS

Control keys: definable
Joystick: Kempston, Interface 2, Cursor
Keyboard play: positive
Use of colour: attribute clash on the roadway
Graphics: very clever scrolling cityscape
Sound: bashes, crashes and a catchy tune
Skill levels: four
Screens: four scrolling cities to drive round
General rating: A driving game with a fair bit of gameplay behind it

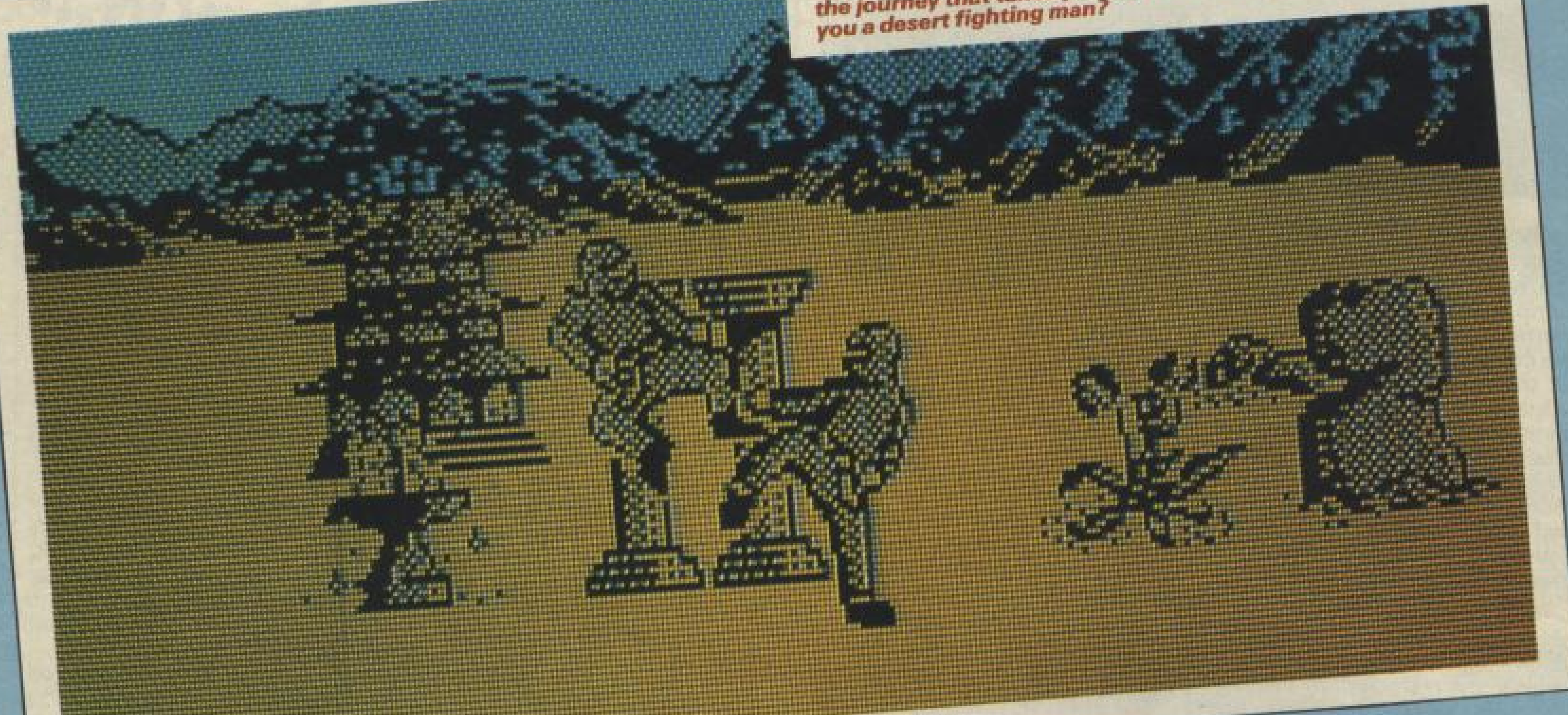
Use of computer	90%
Graphics	90%
Playability	89%
Getting started	87%
Addictive qualities	90%
Value for money	86%
Overall	88%

T·H·E W·A·Y

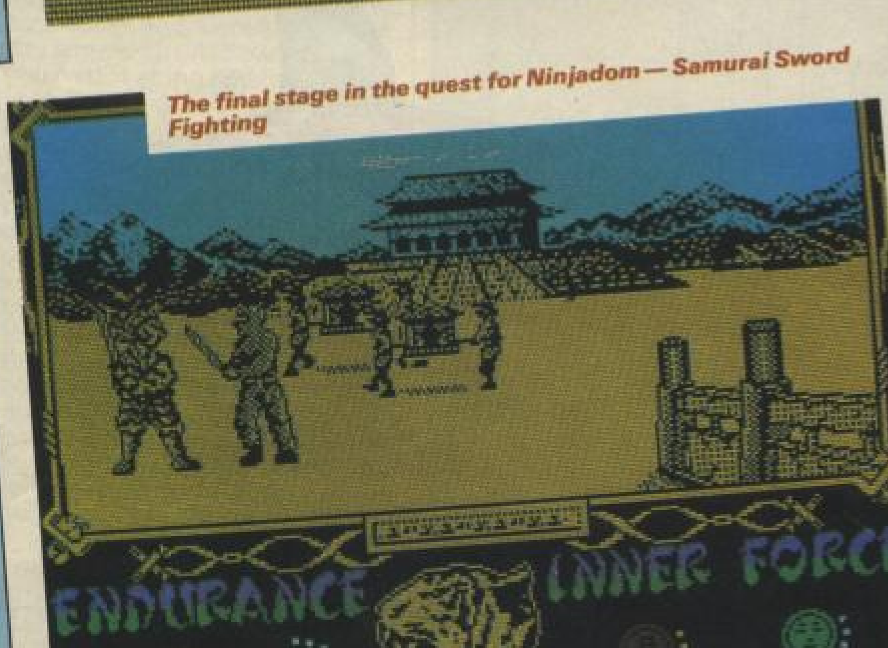


Not a pretty sight, that skellington. Cameron's got a new cupboard in the photography room for all his expensive equipment — wonder if he's got any skeletons in it? Hmm . . .





Hai YA! Flying kicks in the desert during the first stage of the journey that takes you on THE WAY OF THE TIGER. Are you a desert fighting man?



The final stage in the quest for Ninjadom — Samurai Sword Fighting



Producer: Gremlin Graphics
Retail price: **£9.95**
Author: **C Kerry, S Hollingworth, P Harrap, M Duros**

O·F T·H·E T·I·G·E·R

Abandoned as an orphan on the shores of the Island of Tranquil Dreams, you were adopted by an old monk — Naijishi, Grand Master of the Dawn. The monks on the island worship Kwon, the god of unarmed combat, and your adopted father has trained you in the martial arts — it's a Ninja he wants to make of you, not just a man! Before becoming worthy of the noble title of Ninja you must pass three tests of endurance and skill in combat against opponents chosen by the Master. Tests of your skills in unarmed combat, pole fighting, and Samurai sword fighting await in Gremlin Graphics' computerised version of the role playing adventure books.

The game comes on two cassettes, and a master program has to be loaded before the fighting can start. From the menu screen provided by the master loader you can opt to practise one of the three forms of combat or choose to take the full test, working your way through all three stages. Select keyboard or joystick, press the key to select an entry point in the game and load in the appropriate cassette to begin the fighting.

An oriental tune introduces the action, which takes place on a large window on the screen. The status area gives a readout on Endurance and Inner Force levels, represented by circles at the bottom of the display. For every complete circle of Endurance used by a combatant, one point of Inner Force is deducted and the fighter who runs out of Inner Force first loses the contest. The opponents sent against you by the Master have different levels of Endurance and Inner Force as well as a variety of skills. As a fighter's Inner Force wanes, the power of the blows he lands and the effect they have on his opponent is reduced.

The display system features a triple scroll effect, which allows three levels of animation on the screen and provides animated backdrops. The fighting takes place in the foreground and the middle and background animation areas are used for incidental action. Pole fighting, for instance, takes place on a pole perched on the banks of a river: logs float down the watercourse while ducks paddle about, occasionally taking to the air.

In the first section of the game you find yourself wandering in the desolate desert land of Orb without a weapon. The Master has collected a range of opponents to pit against his trainee Ninja, and they are not all humanoid. He's not averse to animating the odd rock or obelisk to test your skills. Anticipation mounts as you await the first opponent. Suddenly, a pointy-eared goblin jumps out from behind a rock — the battle is on! As in the other two sections of the game, control is effected in the usual beat em up manner, using eight directions in combination with fire to make a total of sixteen moves. Once the goblin is out of the way a floating spectre creeps up from behind and gradually zaps away your strength. Each time an opponent is despatched your status levels are topped up in readiness for the next fight. The contest continues until all the Master's challengers have been defeated or you die. Simple, really!

Once the desert of Orb has been cleared of aggressive nasties, it's on to the Pole Fighting section. Standing on a pole spanning a river, you're suddenly confronted by an armour plated skeleton with a very nasty grin on its face. Armed with quarterstaffs you enter battle, attempting to wear each other's Inner Force levels down to zero. The skeleton is not alone — once it has been despatched to the murky depths of the river whence it came, other pole fighters join the fray including another Ninja and a mean looking dwarf with a club.

Survival in the pole fighting leads to the Grand Temple and the final section of the game. The scene of the last test is majestic indeed. Snow-capped mountains rise to meet the sky on the horizon and the Temple appears behind you. Birds flutter overhead, labourers trundle wheelbarrows to and fro and all seems very peaceful until . . . a mongolian sword fighter with an enormous knife in his hand jumps up. In Samurai Sword Fighting the Master pits you against the greatest warriors he knows, some of whom can perform fighting feats which you simply can't match. It's possible to defeat the Master's minions, but difficult . . .

If the swordsmen are all defeated, one further test remains — it's time to confront the Grand Master himself. If you are able to prevent him from making mincemeat of your corpse you have truly have earned the right to be a Ninja, "speaker of wisdom, protector of the weak. One most powerful".

The Way of the Tiger is a perilous way indeed . . .

CRITICISM

" I am very impressed with this game. It is definitely the best beat em up to date, and any new fighting game will have to go a long way to better this. I can't really fault Way of the Tiger **in any way — there is plenty of action, it is very compelling and great fun to play. Graphically this game is second to none. Each of the many characters is well drawn and all their moves are excellently animated and very realistic. The backgrounds are all masterpieces in their own right, too. Sound is well used and there is a tuneette when you've minced your opponent and at the end of a screen. The only niggle one could possibly have with this one is that you have to load in the different parts of the program, but it is well worth the wait. I strongly recommend this game to everyone. "**

CRITICISM

" I thought that these Karate type games were getting a bit monotonous now, but with the advent of Gremlin Graphics' Way of the Tiger **that has changed. The game itself has three distinct stages all of which are superbly executed. To avoid attribute problems most of the game is displayed in two colours, but with that said it is still visually appealing. The graphics themselves are detailed and probably the best featured in a game of this type. Watching someone else play the game is somewhat akin to watching a movie, there is action going on all the time and with the assorted effects happening in the background it all looks very convincing. As with most beat em ups, the game is instantly playable. The increasing difficulty of your opponents coupled with the three separate games make it very addictive. To my mind,** Way of the Tiger **is the best game yet from the Gremlin stable. Let's hope that all the other Ninja games are as good as this. "**

CRITICISM

" I didn't much like the constant loading of the game but it does represents very good value for money. The animation of the characters is very well polished off and considering the characters are massive the speed is very fast. I was very impressed when I looked behind the speedy animation and found beautiful backgrounds and some neat touches like the ducks that constantly swim behind the action, and take off. Way of the Tiger **gives new life to the beat em up games and takes over where** Way of the Exploding Fist **left off. I enjoyed playing** Tiger **more than** Fist **because there is a much harder challenge in it and more variation of play.** Way of the Tiger **gives a new challenge to all those people who said** Fist **was easy. "**

COMMENTS

Control keys: W, E, D, C, X, Z, A and Q plus SPACE
Joystick: Kempston
Keyboard play: responsive
Use of colour: mainly monochromatic
Graphics: very clever indeed
Sound: a jolly tune
Skill levels: one
Screens: three fighting styles
General rating: An excellent development on the beat em up theme

Use of computer	**92%**
Graphics	**94%**
Playability	**94%**
Getting started	**93%**
Addictive qualities	**93%**
Value for money	**92%**
Overall	**93%**

GREEN BERET

Producer: Imagine
Retail price: **£7.95**
Author: **Jonathan Smith**

In the very beginning there was *Commando*, then came *Rambo*. Now *Green Beret* continues the military microchip craze that's sweeping the UK — penetrating deep behind enemy lines and blowing up several armies single handed. Yes it's you versus the rest of the world in this game of skill and dexterity. Rescuing captives is the object of this arcade conversion, and Green B has to delve deep behind enemy lines through a missile base, around a harbour, over a bridge and into a prison camp to rescue his fighting buddies.

Armed with only a knife your soldier has to ward off many kinds of enemies — GI Joe Kung Fu specialists, gun toting commandos and kilted kamikaze killers. No matter what the enemy soldiers look like, they all take one of Green's three lives if they touch him. Pressing the fire button gets the 'stab action' going and any renegades who are careless enough to run into the swift and silent blade are instantly stabbed to death. Green Beret is a pretty able fellow, capable of jumping and lying down whilst repeatedly stabbing — pretty useful if he is to avoid the waist high bullets shot at him. He can also climb up and down ladders and other artefacts. Occasionally an enemy Commandant appears in the battlezone and if he's killed the player is awarded either a machine gun, a flame thrower or rocket launcher good for three shots, or three grenades.

Each of the four scenarios is made up of four separate screens which scroll to the left. Once Mr Beret has scrolled the screen left it can't be scrolled right, rather like *Scramble*, but the hero can move around the screen in view however he wishes, scampering over the ground, along catwalks and up and down ladders to his heart's content.

All the scenes have their own distinctive landscape — the first starts with a series of iron girder bridges connected to the ground by a number of ladders. Green can climb these and trundle along the catwalk, missing most of the enemy soldiers who stampede below. After the girder bridge comes a group of missile launcher lorries which have ladders at the back of them and can also be climbed over. Once the hero has negotiated them then it's a quick sprint past a collection of static missile launchers to the end of the landscape. Once he reaches the end a lorry zooms by, pulls up at the extreme right hand of the screen and heaps of enemy soldiers pour out. If Green doesn't have a rocket launcher or another device of devastating destruction then the going gets really tough. When all the baddies have been disposed of then he can tackle the next mission.

Points are awarded for blowing away enemy soldiers — and enemy installations. Bonus lives are available at 30,000 points and every 70,000 points thereafter. Marauding soldiers aren't the only hazard to Green's health. Occasionally he may stumble across a mine, and if he doesn't jump over or avoid it by clambering over one of the features of the scenery he'll be blown up. Mortar bombers also pose problems by hurling bombs at our hapless hero, although once their bombs have been avoided the bombers can be stabbed to death. Fire from the sky rains down in later stages of the game.

When the sequence of four missions has been completed the sequence starts again, only this time there are even more soldiers coming at your hero. How mean a fighting machine are you?

CRITICISM

● " **At first you may think it's** Commando **or** Rambo **looking from a different viewpoint. The objective is almost the same as in** Rambo: **rescue the captives and advance through hostile ground. As you are super tough, making your way behind the lines single handed is possible, though tricky. The graphics in the background are quite impressive, with some neat scenery scrolling by as you go over bridges or pass rocket launchers. Dodging bullets and bombs and dealing out death becomes quite addictive, once you get the hang of stabbing every baddie that comes your way. It's a good shoot em up but not quite worthy of a CRASH Smash.** "

● " Green Beret *is an excellent conversion of the arcade game, and Imagine deserve a pat on the back for making such good jobs of all the Kjonami games. As far as I could make out, the Spectrum version has got all the features of the great arcade game. It contains lots of good little characters, all of which are well animated (especially the jumping soldiers). Meeting the commandant is just like meeting* Rambo — *a small muscly figure in a T-Shirt with a headband— not much like a real commandant. The game contains lots of colour and avoids any chance of attribute clashes very neatly.* Green Beret *has lots of very well drawn backgrounds with loads of trees, missile carriers and so on. All this, combined with excellent gameplay make it one of the best bash bomb blow games around.* "

● " The arcade game isn't exactly the best game I've played but Imagine have done a pretty good job with the conversion, and produced quite a playable, if a little difficult, knife em down/ blow em up. The graphics are fine, but I must confess to being a little disappointed at the sound, especially after the standard of Imagine's last few games. The other niggling point is that once the keys have been selected there is no chance to change them without reloading. These quibbles aside, the game is still very playable presents quite a challenge. Worth buying if you like this sort of game. "



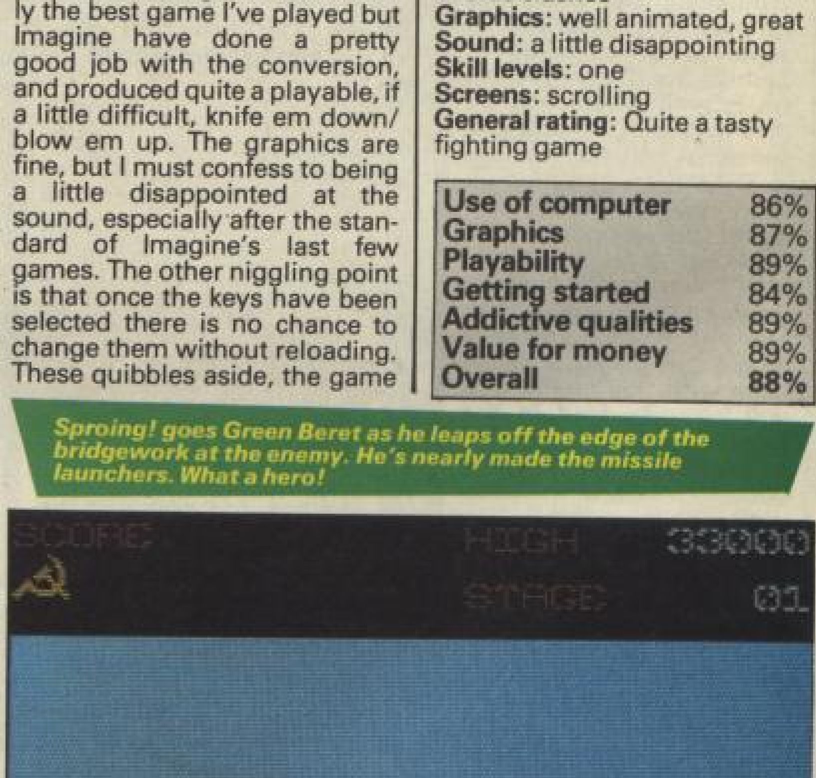
Legging it along the catwalk between the bridge superstructure and the ground. Fortunately for you, those tanks parked down below don't shoot

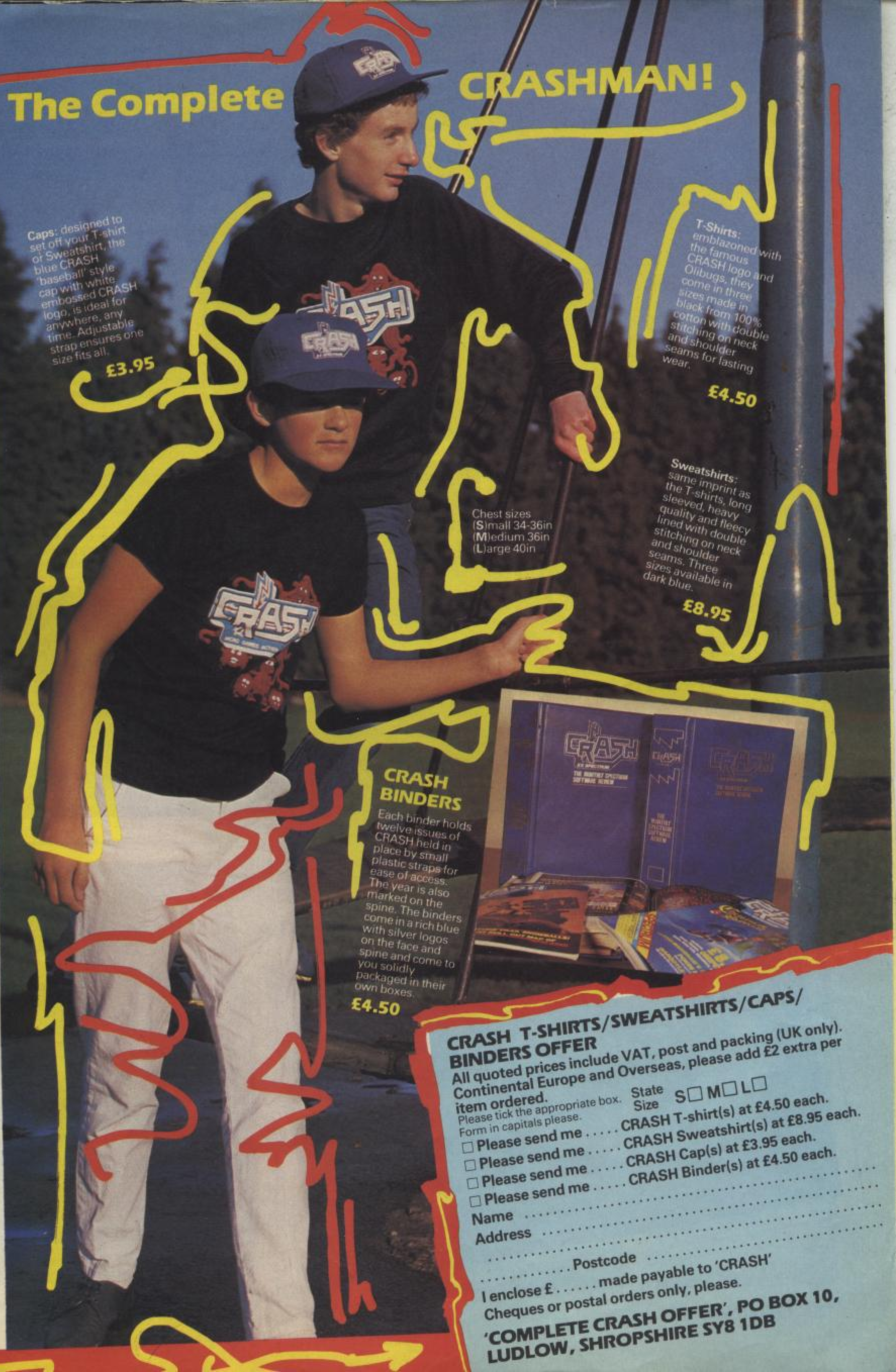
COMMENTS

Control keys: redefinable
Joystick: Kempston, Interface 2, Cursor
Keyboard play: fine
Use of colour: neat use of bright, avoids clashes
Graphics: well animated, great
Sound: a little disappointing
Skill levels: one
Screens: scrolling
General rating: Quite a tasty fighting game

Use of computer	86%
Graphics	87%
Playability	89%
Getting started	84%
Addictive qualities	89%
Value for money	89%
Overall	88%

Sproing! goes Green Beret as he leaps off the edge of the bridgework at the enemy. He's nearly made the missile launchers. What a hero!





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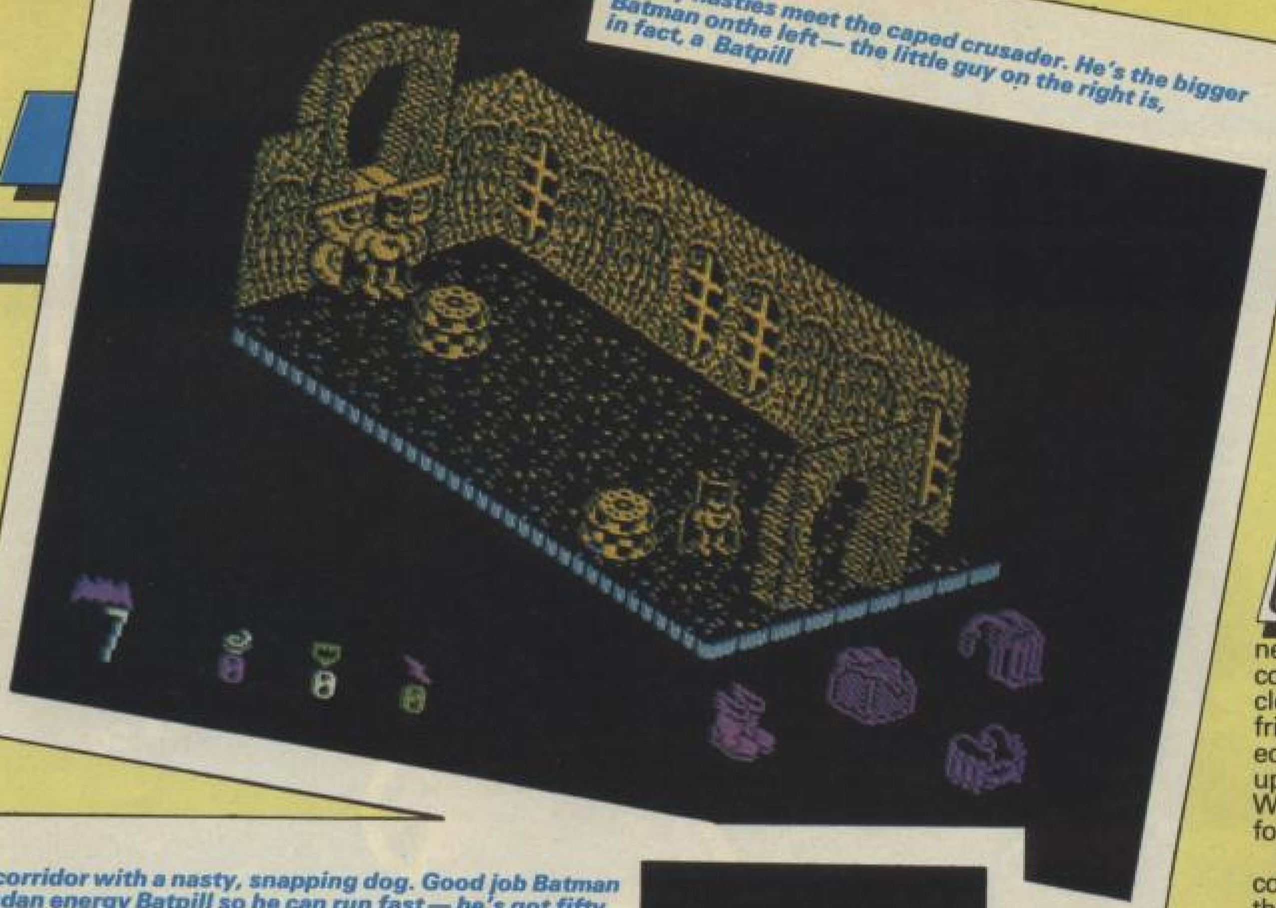
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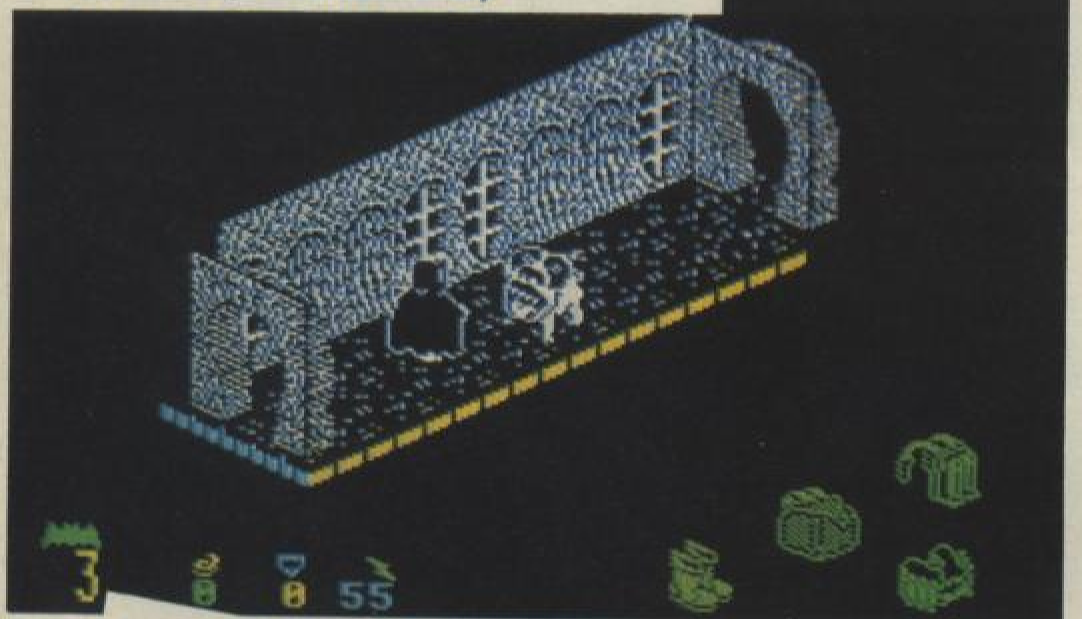
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Whirly nasties meet the caped crusader. He's the bigger Batman onthe left — the little guy on the right is, in fact, a Batpill



In a corridor with a nasty, snapping dog. Good job Batman foundan energy Batpill so he can run fast — he's got fifty five superfast steps left in his inventory

Gotham City's caped crusader continues his quest against crime in Ocean's new release, *Batman*. In this computerised adventure, our clean-living hero's ever faithful friend Robin has been kidnapped by an evil arch villain and it's up to Batman to rescue the Boy Wonder from the clutches of the forces of evil.

Once you've configured the controls for the game, defining the keys or joystick as appropriate and selecting the sound level you require, Batman springs into action, sliding down the pole into the Batcave complex. He's got a problem: the Bat Mobile doesn't work! Suddenly the superhero remembers —



Producer: Ocean
Retail price: **£7.95**
Author: **Jon Ritman and Bernie Drummond**



In a roomful of conveyor belts, Batman pegs it away from apatrolling monster. The Batboots are on the far right of the walkway, on the other side of that fiend



On a perilous walkway, above a spiky floor Batman risks death on his quest to rescue Robin

B·A·T·M·A·N

A CRASH Smash

Robin was servicing the Batmobile when he was abducted, and seven vital Batmobile parts are lying hidden in the Batcave. Before he can roar forth onto the roads, Batman has to collect the seven Bat Bits and install them in the Batmobile.

At the start of the game Batman's powers are limited — he can stroll round the caves, and that's about it. He needs to find some Bat Equipment to give him the powers needed to complete his quest. Four vital Bat Devices have to be collected: Jet Batboots (for jumping); Batbag (allows the caped crusader to pick up and put down objects); Batthruster (allows horizontal movement when falling) and a Low Gravity Batbelt (halves the speed of a fall).

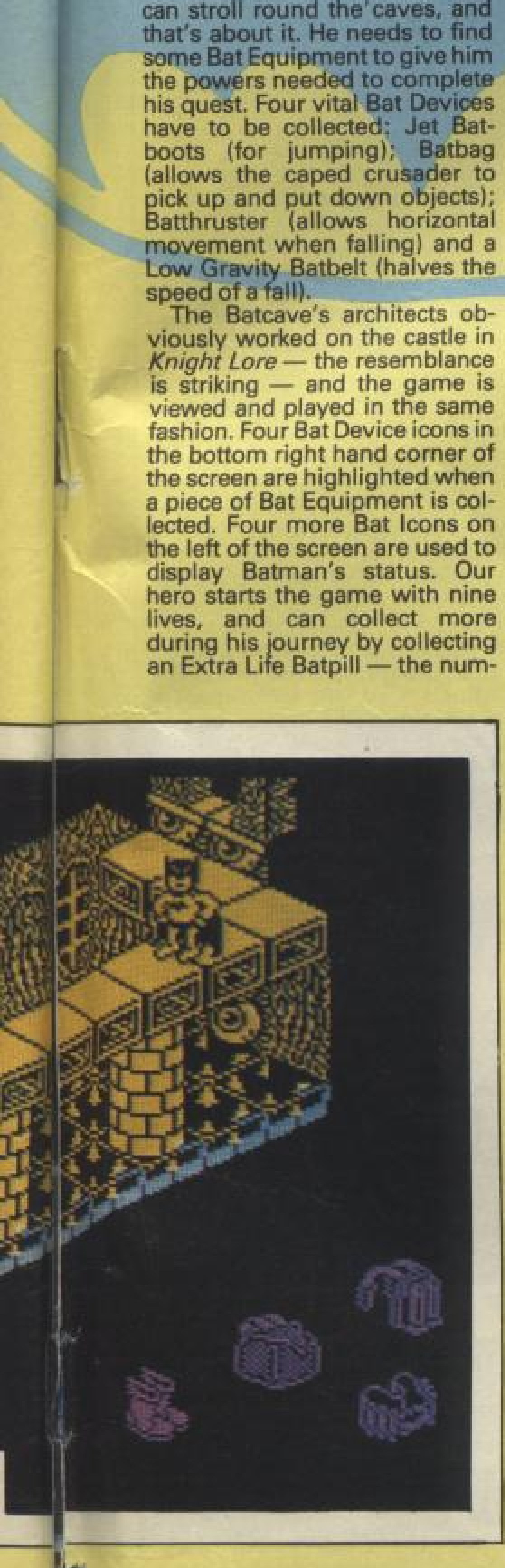
The Batcave's architects obviously worked on the castle in *Knight Lore* — the resemblance is striking — and the game is viewed and played in the same fashion. Four Bat Device icons in the bottom right hand corner of the screen are highlighted when a piece of Bat Equipment is collected. Four more Bat Icons on the left of the screen are used to display Batman's status. Our hero starts the game with nine lives, and can collect more during his journey by collecting an Extra Life Batpill — the number of lives remaining is shown under a Batsign logo. Three more icons are used to display jumping ability, shield status and energy, and are activated when an appropriate Batpill is collected.

Batpills look like small Batmen, and tend to fall from the roof of the Batcave. They all look the same, and the only way to find out what a Batpill does, is to pick it up and spot which Batpillicon gains a number. If an Energy Batpill is picked up, Batman can move at high speed — a counter beneath the lightning flash icon ticks down with each superfast step until it reaches zero and it's back to a strolling pace. Shield Batpills give Batman invulnerability for a while, and Jump Batpills allow a number of double strength jumps to be made. To add a little extra excitement to the game, Neutralizing Batpills turn up now and again, which remove any shield energy and super jumps in Batman's inventory. Bad News, as the instructions say...

Another very useful thing in the Bat Cave are Reincarnation-stones. If Batman touches one it disappears after recording the state of play and Batman's position. If Batman fails in his quest and runs out of lives, the game can be continued from the point when Batman last touched a Reincarnation Stone.

The Batcave has been extensively remodelled from the movie days,and it's huge! Unfortunately, there are now some very nasty creatures lurking in the hallowed halls, all of them keen to remove a life from our hero's stocks — one touch from a baddie and it's one life less for the caped crusader. Spiked floors, which usually have dissolving pieces of catwalk above them, are deadly, as are some rather more innocuous objects. Conveyor belts and lifts as well as suspended, disappearing and sinking floors also provide problems to an unwary Batperson. Sometimes objectsor exits to a room are too high to reach or jump onto, so Batman has to pick up Bat Objects (stuff like Elephant's Feet and Art Nouveau Tea Pots amongst other things) and pile them up to enable him to achieve his goal.

Batman is rushing to rescue his friend — if you leave him standing in once place for too long he crosses his arms and taps a foot impatiently. He wants to collect the Bat Equipment, find the seven parts of the Batmobile so he can teleport to the launchpad, get into the Batmobile, start the motor and get on with rescuing Robin. There's no time to lose...



CRITICISM

" Despite the tremendous amount of Knight Lore **type looking games I still find that coming back to this type of game is lots of fun. The front-end menu is great and caters for nearly everything you need, including three sound levels. There are lots of well detailed little creatures and objects to admire as you walk (or fly) around Batman's caves. The animation of Batman is very life like and adds to the realism of the game which I'm sure will appeal to all age groups. The instructions are well balanced so that you can easily get into the game but still find lots of problems that will cause a lot of hassle — or pleasure if you solve them. Nearly every room has something to do in it, which means that there isn't much trudging around aimlessly — which annoyed me about** Movie. **I loved** Movie **and this is a great follow up from Ocean, even if you have already got a shelf full of this sort of game. "**

CRITICISM

" What a great game! The standard of games recently has shot up,and it's games like Batman **that contribute to the rise instandards. The 3D effect is great, and the game has got quite afront end on it, with adjustable sound and** Dark Star **type definable keys. Despite the fact that this game shouldn't take a good player a millenium to complete, it is challenging to a certain extent and is fun enough to keep anyone at the keys for a good while. The reincarnation stones scattered around the playing area are extremely useful, as they give you the opportunity to lose a few lives trying to suss out a problem and come back later with a few lives remaining. Overall, a very polished and attract ive game that should keep fans of the TV series happy for ages, as well as everyone else. "**

CRITICISM

" Bat Ma-a-a-a-n. **Yes folks, the caped crusader comes toyour Sinclair Spectrum bringing thrills, spills and chills in an action packed arcade adventure program. Gasp at the excellent graphics. Scratch your skull in bemusement at the tricky puzzles your hero has to negotiate and watch in wonderment as the defender of truth and faith attempts to rescue his lifelong sidekick Robin from the clutches of the evil villain. You will not be disappointed if you walk around to your nearest computer software stockist and purchase this truly exciting piece of software. "**

COMMENTS

Control keys: definable
Joystick: Kempston, Interface 2, Cursor
Keyboard play: adjustable, and very responsive
Use of colour: Okay; avoids attributes well
Graphics: excellent, with some really imaginative characters
Sound: not overly wonderful: a Batman theme tune and a fewspot effects
Skill levels: one
Screens: more than 150
General rating: a neatly finished game which does Batman proud

Use of computer	**93%**
Graphics	**95%**
Playability	**94%**
Getting started	**91%**
Addictive qualities	**93%**
Value for money	**91%**
Overall	**93%**

SAI COMBAT

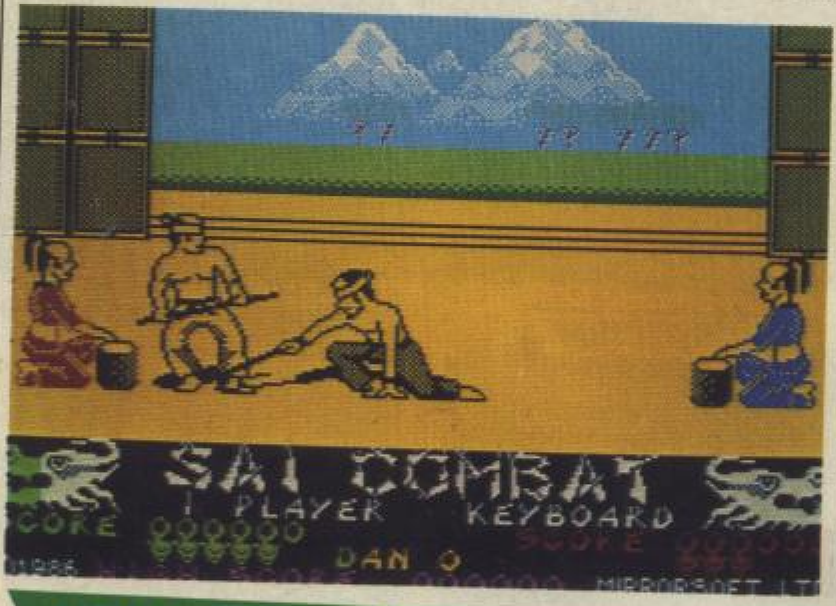
Producer: Mirrorsoft
Retail price: **£6.95**
Author: **David T Clark**

Ever fancied your chances when it comes to fighting a man with a pointy stick? Well now you can find out how good you are, courtesy of Mirrorsoft, who have just released the computerised version of yet another venerable martial art — Sai Karate — which allowsyou to take up a stick and fight.

The art of Sai Karate evolved in Japan hundreds of years ago as a variant of Karate in which combatants use a stick, or sai, to make attacking and defending moves as well as the more usual kicks and punches. The pointy stick involved in Sai Karate needn't be used for fighting — there's a form of gymnastic exercise called Sai Kata practiced by Japanese keep fit fanatics as a solo artform, but Mirrorsoft have stuck with the straightforward beat em up application of the rod of wood, and exercise freaks will have to look elsewhere!

into demo mode and two combatants slug it out on screen, illustrating the sixteen different moves available to a computerised Sai fighter. Pressing the 1 or 2 key allows you to choose the one or two player mode and combat can begin. Using joystick or keyboard the fighter(s) are controlled in the usual beat em up way involving the use of all eight directions and the fire button to execute moves from the *Sai Combat* repertoire. If the two fighters cross each other on the screen, each moving into their opponent's half, the controls change and the mirror image of the keyboard layout or joystick directions are used to make the moves until such time as the two guys get back into their rightful halves of the screen.

During bouts the state of play is monitored on the status area at the bottom of the screen which keeps a track of the scores achieved by each fighter — 100, 200 or 300 points are awarded for each blow landed, depending on the complexity of the manoeuvre involved, and 600 points are won for a knockdown.



BOP! The computer's sai fighter lands one on your ankle in Mirrorsoft's new beat em up game

The combat game allows you to work your way up to the coveted status of Sai Master — playing against a human opponent or the computer. Before becoming a Black Belt, or First Dan fighter, eight oppenents have to be defeated in one on one combat. A further eight Dan levels separate a First Dan Black Belt from mastery of the sport — sixteen levels to fight through in all before achieving the exalted status of Sai Master. Each level in the game has its own suitably oriental backdrop against which the action takes place.

Once the game has loaded, the program automatically goes

Each competitor's Chi, or energy level, is displayed on a dragon's head in the status area which starts off white at the beginning of a bout and gradually fills with colour as hits are taken. When a fighter's Chi level runs out, his dragon head is completely coloured in and the next biff he receives floors him.

In the one player mode the fighter controlled by the computer has to be knocked down three times before you prove your fighting ability and can proceed to the next grade to do battle with a more experienced wielder of the pointy stick. Once you're fighting at Dan level, an



Taking a fall after a poke in the ribs with a pointy stick. Must get one of these pointy sticks to prod Cameron, our photographer, into action!

extra hazard is introduced in the form of Ninja stars which whizz around the screen from time to time. A clout from a ninja star won't actually result in a knockdown fall being awarded against your man, but the old Chi level takes a battering . . . They're definitely to be avoided.

The one player game starts at the novice level and you can survive six falls. When the lives run out, the game returns to the demo screen and is it possible to restart at the level you just expired on — but you only have three lives when fighting recommences. Two players can chose the level at which they want to do battle from the start screen, and slug it out against their favourite background. Using Interface 2 in the two player mode, both players can use a joystick, otherwise at least one player will have to master the use of keys as well as pointy sticks . . .

CRITICISM

● **" Yet another bash and blow game —** Sai Combat **is quite a neat effort with a massive range of moves that are all very well animated. Animation is very similar to that used in** International Karate **but with what appears to be more frames of animation per move. I got used to using the many moves quite quickly, but after a few games realised that I could get through most of the stages easily by using only one or two moves. I also found that the computer opponent could be got into certain sequences in which you could simply knock his block off by using the same move over and over. One bad thing is that if you get into very close contact with the computer opponent it is impossible for either of you to get hit.** Sai Combat **is an improvement over** International Karate **and at the price, it's not a bad buy, but I think** Fist **still rules supreme. "**



● *" I must admit, I'm getting a little bored of fighting games now; I really enjoyed* Fist, *but have gradually got a litle bit more and more cheesed of with beat em ups. That said,* Sai Combat *isn't too bad. The instuctions give a sufficient run down on what has to be done and how to do it, and the game is quite tough too. After a while though, even with the wide variety of moves available, it gets tedious, and getting onto the next level doesn't seem that important. It's just the same sort of sort of stuff as the rest. Not bad, really, but could have been a good deal better. "*

● " Since the release of *Way of the Exploding Fist*, beat em ups have really been big business. Now Mirrorsoft have released their fighting game. The graphics are not the best I have ever seen but the animation of all the characters is marvellous — the way the men jump about the screen is excellently executed. There are few attribute problems because the main playing area is in two colours which is a bit of a relief. The game itself is fun to play and the increasing difficulty of your opponents makes it quite addictive. The two player option is a nice touch. Definitely better then *Exploding Fist*. If you like combat games then take a look at this one! "

COMMENTS

Control keys: 16 per player!
Joystick: Kempston, Interface 2, Cursor
Keyboard play: lots of keys to press!
Use of colour: attractive
Graphics: neat animation, no clashes
Sound: biffing noises only
Skill levels: sixteen in all
Screens: 16
General rating: A neat variant on the beat em up theme

Use of computer	80%
Graphics	81%
Playability	82%
Getting started	85%
Addictive qualities	80%
Value for money	84%
Overall	81%



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